

**Exploring the perceptions of secondary school teachers on the  
Teachers Union of Malawi's undertakings in promoting their welfare:  
the case of Northern Education Division**

By

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## DECLARATION

I, **Colleta Kampingo Sibande**, do hereby declare that the contents of this dissertation are entirely based on my own findings and that I have not in any respect used any person's work without acknowledging the same to be so. I, therefore, bear the absolute responsibility for the contents, errors, defects and any omission herein.

Signature\_\_\_\_\_ Date\_\_\_\_\_

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This Research Project has been submitted for examination with my approval as

University Supervisor



Dr R. MUNYENYEMBE

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# DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to my family.

## ABSTRACT

This study aimed at exploring the perceptions of secondary school teachers about the undertakings of the Teachers Union of Malawi in enhancing teacher welfare in the Northern Education Division. The main objective was to explore the perceptions of teacher members about Teachers Union of Malawi practices in enhancing the welfare of teachers. The study was guided by Social capital theory. It was a qualitative study that utilised an interpretive case design and data was collected through interviews and document analysis. The sample, selected by purposeful, convenience and snowball sampling, consisted of 20 teachers who were members of TUM and 3 administrators of TUM in Mzimba district. The data was coded, categorized, and analysed using a both deductive and inductive thematic approach, and presented through description. The study found out that teachers felt that the Teachers Union of Malawi was partly effective in its effort at improving the welfare of teachers. The study also found out that the union is not doing enough in improving teachers' welfare because of several factors like, lack of the union administrators' grassroots visits, political interference in the union, lack of teachers' involvement in the union and also improper channels of communication between teacher members and the union administrators. Based on the above findings, the following recommendations were made: TUM should provide regular trainings and awareness among trade union members and Teachers Union of Malawi should expand from its focus on traditional roles that centre much on negotiation of salaries to include the establishment of sustainable schemes that have significant impact on the side of members. The study also recommended that TUM has to ensure that there is always an organic link between the union and its members at the grassroots level to facilitate proper communication and ensure teacher members involvement in TUM.

This, to some extent, would help to improve the perception members have of their union.

## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

**TUM** : Teachers Union of Malawi

**SESTU** : Secondary School Teachers Union

**NED** : Northern Education Division

**NEA** : National Education Association

**MZUNIREC** : Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee



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# **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 Introduction**

This study explored teachers' perceptions about the Teachers Union of Malawi (TUM) undertakings in promoting the welfare of secondary school teachers. This introductory chapter presents the background of the study, statement of the problem, rationale of the study, objectives of the study and research questions. The chapter also presents the significance of the study and the theoretical framework. Lastly, this chapter gives descriptions of key terms used in the study.

## **1.2 Background to the Study**

The Malawi Labour Relations Act of 1996 defines a trade union as any combination of persons with the purpose of the representation and the promotion of employees' interests and the regulation of the relations between employees and employers. A trade union or a labour union, is essentially an organization of workers whose function is to mobilize employees to act together to enable collective bargaining (Government of Malawi, 1996).

Unions act as a bridge between employees and employers. They are responsible for bringing grievances of their members to the attention of the employer, ensuring collective bargaining and providing learning opportunities to union members. Unions are founded on the basic understanding that there is strength in unity and that a battle fought as a unit is likely to have impact than individual battles. This is why

many employees join unions in their respective sectors to fight for their rights as a group.

A teachers' union is an organised labour group in education that is legally constituted to play meaningful roles in education and making sure that the welfare of teachers is taken into consideration while ensuring high quality and standard of education (Mafisa, 2017). Unions provide support to teachers through their ability to mobilize and represent teachers' interests nationally, as well as through their reach out to teachers at the local level (Mulkeen, 2010; McCollow, 2017).

Teacher unions have a crucial role to play with regard to educational programmes, policies, and reforms. Through the reports of the teacher members of teachers' unions, unions provide an insight on the actual conditions of teaching and learning in the classroom (Bascia & Osmond, 2013). They are also responsible for the coordination of their members and there is no educational policy that can succeed without sufficient consultation with the teacher, who is the person who deals directly with the daily encounters of the classroom situation (Mafisa, 2017). Cowen and Strunk (2014) observe that teacher unionism is an important and indispensable component of any democratic approach to the provision of education. The next section looks at the development and role of unions in Malawi.

### ***1.2.1 Teachers' Unions in Malawi***

McCracken (1998) indicates that in Malawi, the development of an organised labour movement was a result of numerous strikes against poor wages, and working conditions of teachers, domestic servants and rail workers in the 1940s. During this time, workers associated the poor working conditions with the foreign government.

As such, the different unions that were formed by then joined in the struggle for independence. Around 1964, trade unions that helped to fight for independence started to be deregistered because of the political tension of dictatorship at that time. In 1965, the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) affiliated all the trade unions to the ruling party, giving it the mandate to control unions. It was in 1993 when Malawi was transitioning to multiparty democracy that the state re-started recognising and respecting the freedom of association.

The first teachers' union in Malawi started as Teachers Association of Malawi (TAM). It was founded in 1945 by missionary teachers at Henry Henderson Institute in Blantyre in order to address teachers' own concerns, and improve the general conditions of service and welfare of teachers and the learners (TUM constitution). After its founding, membership to this union was automatic to all teachers until 1994. In 1995, Teachers Union of Malawi was registered, and membership was made voluntary where the union now had to start recruiting members. TUM has membership from primary, secondary and teachers training colleges.

Currently in Malawi, two teacher unions in the education sector represent public teachers namely: the Teachers Union of Malawi (TUM) and Secondary School Teachers Union (SESTU), a splinter union that registered in 2021.

This study focused on TUM, as it has been the sole union body of public secondary and primary school teachers since 1994 up to 2021 when SESTU was registered.

### ***1.2.2 Objectives of Teachers Union of Malawi (TUM)***

TUM operations are professional and mostly interested in the welfare of teachers, students, and education as a whole. As such, they are instrumental in identifying

problems affecting the education system. Some of the objectives of TUM indicated in its constitution are to unite all teachers in Malawi; and promote the professional development of teachers by conducting courses aimed at improving methods of teaching.

The other objective is to serve as a mouthpiece for its members to the Ministry of Education and educational authorities or other stakeholders, by bringing to their notice, matters affecting teachers. For instance, challenges in the implementation of the curriculum, staff distribution, teaching and learning resources, teachers' accommodation, classroom space, and remuneration of teachers. Furthermore, it seeks to secure unified and better terms and conditions of employment and services for all teachers.

This shows that TUM is committed to strengthening the teaching profession and improving the quality of education by focusing on the teachers who play a significant role in guaranteeing quality education.

### ***1.2.3. Teachers Welfare***

Teachers' welfare is an indispensable factor for consideration while thinking of human resource element, which is vital to the achievement of the school objectives (Rwigema, 2022). Among the factors contributing to the welfare of teachers are economic security that is guaranteed by adequate salaries, provisions for retirement and tenure of position. There is also professional adequacy that ensures that teachers are well trained both in pre-service and in-service trainings. In addition, welfare involves personal security that focuses on academic and social freedom of the teacher. Furthermore, welfare of teachers looks at the working conditions of the



teacher that includes the ratio of learners to teachers, availability of teaching and learning materials, and the general teachers surrounding.

Many factors influence the performance of teachers. These are teacher motivation, availability of teaching and learning resources, job satisfaction, and working conditions. The duty of teachers' unions is to negotiate all these with the employer so that a teacher performs well to improve the learners' performance.

The welfare problems that teachers are facing are many and complex ranging from low salaries to low status and inadequate professional development opportunities. Teachers, however, feel that their concerns are not being addressed. If these concerns remain unaddressed, teachers will feel demoralized and consequently, the quality of education is bound to suffer. There is need for various stakeholders, government and teachers unions to come together to resolve the problems in order to motivate teachers. Motivating teachers through improved teacher welfare and professional development will have a positive impact on the quality of education.

### **1.3 Problem Statement**

Promoting the welfare of teachers is an important element in ensuring the commitment of the teacher in teaching and improving education. The Teachers Union of Malawi (TUM) is a teachers' organization formed with the key objective of ensuring that the welfare and living standards of teachers are improved. Although most teachers are members of TUM, there has not been significant improvement in their general welfare (Kankuta, Simuyaba, Haambokoma & Mwewa, 2020). One may argue that the success of TUM in fulfilling its mandate of improving the welfare of teachers can best be measured by what members perceive of its role and of its

undertakings in working on their welfare. If teachers have a positive perception of their union, it indicates that the organisation is fulfilling its objectives. However, a negative perception of teachers about the union may indicate that the organisation is failing to fulfil its mandate of improving teachers' welfare. The perceptions of teachers about their union, has a significant bearing on their identification with the union or lack of it. It can further be argued that members' perceptions with the union, not only has an effect on solidarity, which is the basis of any union's bargaining power, but it also has a bearing on members' job satisfaction, motivation and consequently, the quality of education. Teacher members perceptions about TUM in this regard, forms an important aspect of feedback upon which the organisation can build to improve teachers' welfare, job satisfaction and the quality of education. The study therefore set out to explore what teacher members think about TUM's undertakings in improving their welfare.

## **1.4 Rationale**

There is not much published research on teacher unionism in Malawi. Most studies on educational unions have been carried out outside Malawi and their findings have been generalised to several international contexts. Few studies that exist on the Malawian context have mostly focused on other aspects of teacher unionism such as the role of teacher unions in new curriculum implementation, on motivation, working conditions and others. Kalusopa (2012) explored the trade union services and benefits in Malawi and his focus was on all the trade unions in Malawi. In addition, Kadzamira explored teacher motivation and incentives in Malawi, where the focus was on teachers' perspective and not their union. Not much has been investigated regarding the perception of teacher members on the extent to which

Teachers Union of Malawi practices enhance the welfare of teachers in public secondary schools. This study therefore, sought to explore whether TUM members feel the organisation meets their expectations in enhancing teacher welfare.

## **1.5 Objectives of the Study**

The study was guided by the following objectives:

### ***1.5.1 Main Objective***

To explore the perceptions of teacher members about Teachers Union of Malawi practices in enhancing the welfare of teachers.

### ***1.5.2 Specific Objectives***

1. To examine teachers' perceptions about the role of Teachers Union of Malawi in education.
2. To explore perceptions of teachers on TUM's ability to safeguard teachers' welfare in public secondary schools in NED
3. To investigate the factors that limit TUM in promoting the welfare of teachers.

## **1.6 Research Questions**

To achieve the above objectives, the study sought to answer three questions:

- 1) What are the teachers' perceptions about the role of TUM in education?
- 2) What are the perceptions of teachers on TUM's ability to safeguard teachers' welfare in public secondary schools in NED
- 3) What are the factors that limit TUM in promoting the welfare of teachers?

## **1.7 Significance of the Study**

The study findings on the perception of teachers regarding TUM's role and effectiveness in promoting teacher welfare might be used by TUM to better understand the needs of teachers and improve its capacity in addressing those needs and the general welfare of teachers.

The findings, upon dissemination, may also prove valuable to other stakeholders in the education sector working to improve the quality of education since teacher welfare is a crucial ingredient in that endeavour.

The government, through the Ministry of Education and Teacher Service Commission (TSC) could use the findings of the study to better teachers' working conditions in order to improve their job satisfaction, and in turn, their performance. In addition, the study findings would help teachers to get informed on how unions can improve their welfare. When aiding the union they would know what to emphasize on to improve their welfare.

The findings of the study may be important to policy makers in the Ministry of Education as the information on teachers would be used when drafting policies affecting unions. These policies would consider the situation on the ground and reinforce positive change.

## **1.8 Theoretical Framework**

### **Social Capital Theory**

This study was guided by Social Capital theory whose proponent is Pierre Bourdieu.

Social capital theory is defined as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition” (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 248). It means the resources embedded in social networks are accessed and used by actors for action. It has its base in social networks as it stresses the importance of social ties and relations. The theory focuses on benefits accruing to individuals by virtue of participation in groups and on the construction of groups for the aim of creating this resource. The theory suggests that interactive relations create some value for individuals as they provide important resources that can be used for the accomplishments of desired outcomes (Rhadhi, 2021). Social capital therefore refers to the benefits derived or which can be obtained from civility.

Social capital theory suggests that if individuals come together to form connections, the benefits that are linked to membership in such a group provide each of its members with the backing of collectively owned capital that may satisfy an individual's social needs. These collective assets can be used by individuals or subgroups within the network. The theory also looks at how people act within the social sphere to achieve their goals and how occupational or professional groups use their social capital to strengthen their cultural capital. The theory argues that, if an individual comes into contact with his/her fellow citizens and then with other fellow citizens, there will be an accretion of social capital, which may straightaway satisfy his social needs and which may lead to a social potentiality satisfactory to the significant development of living conditions in the entire community (Bandari, 2009).

TUM, as a social capital organisation that teachers have joined through membership, helps its members to improve their welfare. TUM involves getting members to

knowing each other and encouraging intense positive relationships based on belief, appreciation, understanding, and mutuality. It would prove difficult for teachers to improve their welfare through their own individual efforts. Such efforts would not be as effective as the collective bargaining power that a union affords. The collective bargaining power, which the social network of a union makes possible, forms the social capital on which members can draw to improve their welfare. The profits that accrue from membership in this group are the basis of its solidarity.

Bourdieu's theory stresses the importance of individual investment and usage of the membership in the social network as every individual is an asset that helps the group to improve. Likewise, for TUM to be effective, it needs the solidarity of all teachers. As such, it is necessary for members to have a positive perception of their union. Members' positive perception is only possible if they see the benefits of their membership to the organisation. For a union to be effective it is largely up to the active quest of individuals and groups to activate and use the capital and this is possible if there is good communication channels and individual member involvement in the union. When a union is able to promote the welfare of teachers, as it is its main objective, it promotes their trust in the union. Bourdieu's theory also suggests that the social network is used as a bargaining chip in negotiating with the employer. In the same way, TUM makes use of its social network to bargain for improved welfare of teachers. If the union uses this bargaining tool effectively, it will be successful in promoting the welfare of teachers and this would help to maintain a positive perception of the union by its members. The theory will be used to analyse if TUM is working properly as a social unit formed by people for the benefit of its members.

## **1.9 Delimitations of the Study**

The membership of TUM is open to both primary and secondary school teachers in Malawi. However, this study was limited to public secondary school teachers who are Teachers Union of Malawi members who were working within the Northern Education Division at the time this study was conducted.

## **1.10 Limitations of the Study**

Keith (2009) observed that limitations are those conditions beyond the control of the researcher that may place restrictions on the conclusions of the study and their application to other situations. This study was limited in terms of the time that was available to collect data and financial resources. The researcher had to make do with the timelines assigned by the department for different stages of the study. The time available could not allow travel to all districts of the Northern Education Division to interview respondents. In addition, since the study was financed from personal resources, the researcher could only draw the sample from selected districts within NED as was possible with the finances; and even from those selected districts, only a few selected schools and teachers were included in the sample. Furthermore, the unwillingness of some teachers to answer interview questions because they wanted financial rewards hampered the data collection. In some schools, only male teachers volunteered to be interviewed without financial incentives. These constraints might be deemed to affect the generalizability of the findings. However, the sampled schools and respondents still provided in-depth data with which to make the findings transferrable to a target group as it is typical in qualitative research to study a few individuals or a few cases. This is because the overall ability of a researcher to provide an in-depth picture diminishes with the addition of each new individual or site

(Creswell, 2012, p. 209).

## 1.11 Operational Definitions of Terms

**Trade Union:** This is a union that advocates for workers' rights and welfare.

**Teachers Union:** It is a union formed by teachers to advocate for their rights and welfare.

**Teacher Welfare:** In this study teacher welfare refers to teachers' housing, medical care, allowances, the school environment, general wellbeing, and good standard living conditions.

**Collective Bargaining:** This refers to a process of negotiations between the employer and a group of employees aimed at reaching agreements to regulate working conditions.

**Strike:** Refers to a work stoppage caused by mass refusal of employees to work in response to employee grievances.

**Motivational Programmes:** Refers to Trade union' initiatives geared towards encouraging teachers in their work.

**Social Capital:** It refers to combined advantages in the form of shared standards, values, systems, social associations, civic commitment, norms of mutuality, generalized trust and institutes that facilitate cooperation and collective actions for mutual benefits.



## 1.12 Organisation of the Thesis

This dissertation consists of five chapters as follows:-

Chapter one is an introductory chapter consisting of background of the research problem, statement of the research problem, rationale for the study, research objectives both general and specific objectives, research questions and significance of the study, theoretical framework, delimitations of the study and the limitation of the Study.

Chapter two presents the reviews which have been done to different theoretical concepts related to the study. In addition, the chapter provides a picture of the related studies conducted previous in the same research area and the chapter summary.

Chapter three describes the study areas and provides justifications for their selection. The chapter also discusses the methodological approaches that have been employed in the data collection and analysis and the chapter summary.

Chapter four presents and discusses the findings relating to the objectives hypothesized. These are the findings concerning the perception of TUM members to the performance of their union in promoting their welfare.

Chapter five provides the summary, conclusion and recommendation of the researcher. It also suggests the policy implication and it provides an extensive chance to other researchers to conduct the same study in different areas within our country or outside of Malawi.

## 1.13 Chapter Summary

The first or the introductory chapter was focused on the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study and the objectives. It also highlighted the significance of the study and further discussed the theory, which guided the study.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The review of literature was done in accordance with the research objectives and questions in order to determine the extent, to which teacher perceptions regarding their unions has been studied, more especially, teacher perceptions about TUM. To allow a systematic understanding of the research problem, questions and objectives, literature was thematised into key areas of discussion. The review revealed the existence of a significant knowledge gap in the study of teacher unions in Malawi and teachers views regarding TUM.

### **2.2 Legal and Political Environment of Unions in Malawi**

The Malawi Labour Relations Act (LRA) 1996 is the principal law regulating trade unions' conduct in Malawi. Before this Act and throughout the one party government, the state used the 1958 Unions Act to regulate trade unions. However, the 1958 Unions Act was considered to have restricted freedom of association because of its empowerment of the Registrar of Trade Unions to control trade unions (Dzimhiri, 2008). Under the Act, there was no clause allowing for employees' collective bargaining and strikes were severely controlled. The political environment of Malawi after independence did not give people the right to freely belong to an association. As Dzimhiri points out, the one party system of government in Malawi placed such strict control on the labour unions that their existence was imperceptible. This environment prevented workers from demanding improvements in wages and conditions of employment. The government assumed that the demands of the unions would increase production costs thereby reducing profits. Furthermore, allowing unions to

voice out workers' grievances meant giving room to a narrative that countered the official narrative of national economic prosperity that the one party government promoted. This changed in the period 1992-93 in which there were waves of strikes following the transition to a multiparty system of government.

Dzimhiri (2008) noted that the political and economic transformation of the country contributed a lot to the reforms in the Industrial Labour Relations. Many labour rights that were not exercised in the one-party era were recovered. It is in this LRA that freedom of association, collective bargaining, dispute resolution, and the right to withdraw labour were clearly highlighted. This now made the trade unions to be active in bargaining for the welfare benefits of their members. Therefore, the enactment of the Labour Relations Act 1996 was passed to promote sound labour relations through the protection and promotion of freedom of association. Unions nowadays use the collective bargaining to bargain for proper terms to improve the welfare of their members. The trade unions also exercise their right to withdraw labour until their conditions are met by their employer. Though recently the Chakwera government has amended the Act so that employees should go on strike for only three days, after which their employer is empowered to start deducting from their salaries for not working. This amendment was adopted in 2021. The Act amended sections of the principal act 46 of payment of wages during a strike and 47 of resolution of disputes with respect to essential services. The amendments to the Labour Relations Act was received with an outcry from the public. The Centre for Human Rights and Rehabilitation expressed deep concern about the amendment of the Labour Relations Act 2021 citing that it posed a serious threat to workers' rights including the `right to take industrial action which is enshrined in section 31 of the Constitution of Malawi. The Amendment bill which stated that "an employee shall not

be entitled to receive wages for the period he is absent from work due to participation in the strike”, negative the purpose of the right of employees to withdraw labour if they have grievances against the employer (Chimjeka, 2021).

### **2.3 Roles of Teachers’ Trade Unions**

The role of teacher unions in education is of utmost significance. The government alone cannot achieve everything in the field of education in a country. The support of interested stakeholders in education, such as teachers’ unions is necessary (Mafisa, 2017; Coddet, 2014; Kathoni, 2016; Swarnalatha & Sureshkrishna, 2011).

Mafisa (2017) argued that teacher unions have a crucial role to play with regard to educational programmes, policies and reforms. They are responsible for the coordination of their members and they help in the implementation of educational policy through consultation with the teacher. Unions coordinate their members through union representatives who have the duty of representing teachers at the school level as members of the union (Coddet, 2014). Their duty is to make sure that teachers are protected by specific collective bargaining rights stated in the contract. In her study of the influence of trade union practices on teachers’ job satisfaction in public primary schools in Kenya, Kathoni (2016) showed that unions were able to represent teachers even at school level. This representation enabled teachers to be satisfied with their job. These findings are in agreement with Cobble (2011) who stated that trade unions perform a significant role in employees’ lives by protecting the working life of teachers. Similarly, Swarnalatha and Sureshkrishna (2011) stated that the purpose of a teachers’ union is to represent the interests of teachers and make sure that their welfare improves. This echoes Bourdieu’s Social Capital theory in which individuals’ membership to a social group is on account of their expected

benefits from the group. One of benefits of a social group like a union, is the potential power that resides in numbers which individuals otherwise lack to fight for their rights. As Dinyuy and Senor Ugur (2021) have pointed out, the fundamental motivating force for establishing or being part of trade unions is to make even or somehow balance the power among employers and employees.

The power which membership to a union promises can only be appreciated if members perceive that they are yielding benefits from their membership. Studies by Georgelles and Lange (2010) and Waddington (2013) showed that in Eastern and Western Europe, union members were not satisfied with their unions, resulting in a noted decline of membership to unions. This suggests that members did not see membership to a collective employee body as necessary or desirable (Waddington, 2013). These studies also reported that teachers unions focused more on issues that affected teachers nationwide than on those affecting a minority of teachers. If a section of the membership feels its interests are not represented in a union, they are likely to feel disenchanting and find membership unbeneficial.

Kalusopa et al (2012) state that the roles of unions can be categorized into traditional and non-traditional ones. The traditional roles of trade unions are services that are geared towards the betterment of the position of the members in relation to their employment. These services are to ensure that teachers have adequate wages through collective bargaining, and making sure that there are better conditions of work and employment through the collective bargaining process. The non-traditional roles of a union are the benefits that members can access from their unions. These may include payment of school fees for the education of leaders' and members' children and orphans, provision of opportunities for professional training, provision of

assorted loans to members, provision of library facilities for the members and their children, provision of recreational facilities and other benefits (Kalusopa et al., 2012). The extent to which members perceive their union as effectively representing their interests and championing their welfare is be defined by the union's ability to fulfil these traditional and non-traditional roles.

## **2.4 Teacher Unions and Collective Bargaining**

Teacher unions fight for the welfare of teachers with the aim of improving the quality of education, as teachers are a key factor in improving the educational performance of students. Mostly, teacher unions' use their collective bargaining rights to negotiate for improved welfare of teachers (Kasivu, 2020; Wachira & Odhiambo, 2021; Gjerde, 2016; Dzimbiri, 2008; National Education Association, 2017; George, Ingle, & Pogodzinski, 2018; Mafisa, 2017; Masenya, 2013).

Kasivu (2020) defined collective bargaining as an instrument teacher unions use to advance and protect the welfare of teachers. It aims at equalizing the power of teachers and their employers. Wachira and Odhiambo's (2021) study on how the politics of teacher unions affect teacher benefits, found out that teacher unions effectively used both coercive and diplomatic strategies in safeguarding the welfare of teachers. These strategies included strikes and collective bargaining agreements in order to improve teachers' salaries, allowances and health benefits. The study also revealed that when peaceful ways of negotiation with the employer fail, coercive techniques in form of strikes are resorted to. These negotiations are legally binding to both parties as after the teachers' grievances are negotiated; a legal document is drafted and presented to the industrial court.

Just like Wachira and Odhiambo (2021), Gjerde (2016) indicated that collective bargaining is to be the first step to solve issues between employees and employers. If collective bargaining has failed, that is when unions organise coercive measures in form of strikes. However, in his analysis of the situation in Malawi, Dzimbiri (2008) observed that collective bargaining mostly occurred after workers had gone on strike. This is because of the employers' delays in handling workers' grievances. TUM has also in many times engaged in collective bargaining. Some efforts have been fruitful while others have yielded no results (Kalusopa et al., 2012).

The National Education Association (NEA) (2017) argued that collective bargaining gives educators a voice. It helps in fair wages for teachers and aims at improving teacher retention. The collective bargaining process enables educators to work together so that everyone connected to a school setting benefits. These are students, educators, administrators, parents, and the community as a whole. Collective bargaining improves student learning as a teacher whose voice is heard by the employer works with a good frame of mind and is able to concentrate on preparation and delivery of lessons (NEA, 2017). It also helps in ensuring that educators receive better conditions of service that improves the status of the teaching profession. When educators and management come to an agreement on salary, benefits, and working environment, everyone benefits and the quality of education improves. George, Ingle, & Pogodzinski (2018) also point out that teacher unions use collective bargaining to negotiate provisions for various issues like settlement of salaries and benefits, improving the working conditions of teachers, evaluation procedures used in promotions, and transfer policies.

Although collective bargaining has been viewed to improve the welfare of teachers,



Mafisa (2017) contended that historical and contemporary literature on education shows that teacher unions are focusing too much on the well-being of their member teachers instead of the educational interests of the nation. This apprehension about teacher unions was echoed in a study by Mafisa (2017) which reported that communities had a negative perception of teacher unions as they considered them hindering efforts meant to improve the quality of education with their demands for salary increment and strikes. However, one would argue that the welfare of teachers is a prerequisite to the attainment of quality education. If the well-being of teachers is not considered, they cannot work to the best of their ability. The study commissioned by NEA (2017) also disagreed with the view that teacher unions and their bargaining agreements are an obstacle to achieving quality education. The study maintained that collective bargaining in education is important as it improves students' learning and the environment where learning takes place. It goes on to point out that, collective bargaining helps to ensure that educators receive a professional level of pay.

A good remuneration package, one would observe, can attract the best educators to the teaching profession thereby raising the status of teachers and the quality of education as a well-qualified working force has a positive influence on education. As Bascia and Osmond (2013) noted, the prestige of the teaching profession has been dwindling. This dwindling status has led to a decline in the number of graduates opting for the teaching career. By improving the welfare of teachers, the status of the teaching profession can greatly improve with corresponding a corresponding positive impact on education.

As already noted, the role of teacher unions is not only to fight for benefits that

accrue to teachers, but also to actively work towards the improvement of education. Thus, collective bargaining should not be understood in the restricted sense of teacher unions fighting for better salaries and benefits, but unions can also fight for better educational environment. For instance, unions can use collective bargaining to demand for adequate teaching and learning resources and increased staffing in schools. In this regard, Masenya (2013) categorised teacher unions into two: progressive and aggressive. He considered progressive teacher unions to be productive in nature with the ability to improve the management of the school, give teachers opportunities for professional development while also improving the welfare of teachers. On the other hand, aggressive unions aim at increasing the fringe benefits of teachers. NEA (2017) recommended the need for teacher unions and the government to work on both improving teachers' welfare and the education conditions for the benefit of all stakeholders.

The essence of collective bargaining can be summed as to balance the power relations between teachers and their employer in order to improve the welfare and motivation of teachers for the delivery of quality education. The next section therefore, turns to the discussion of teacher welfare and motivation.

## **2.5 Teacher Welfare and Motivation**

Although many factors influence the performance of schools, welfare provision is vital in determining the success of schools for the reason that it is one of the bases of motivation of teachers (Kadzamira, 2006; Iliya, 2015; Alam & Farid, 2011; Nawaz & Yasin, 2015).

A study by Kadzamira (2006) found out that the main influence of teachers' low job

motivation was their economic welfare in terms of remuneration. The study indicated that teachers were underpaid and this had a negative impact on their job performance. Teacher motivation is linked to the teachers' desire to improve the teaching methodologies and their interest in sharing their knowledge with students (Iliya, 2015). The effort teachers will invest in teaching activities will depend, to a large extent, on their motivation. Although teacher motivation is a function of a variety of other factors, such as personal ones, school environment, career development and others, remuneration plays a significant role in motivation (Alam and Farid, 2011). Nawazi and Yasin (2015) concur with Alam and Frarid that salaries have a far more powerful influence on job motivation than intrinsic factors. In Kadzamira's (2006) study, both the Ministry of Education and TUM acknowledged that teachers' salaries were low such that they could not cater for their needs. While this acknowledgement is important, teacher motivation will remain low unless practical steps are taken to address the status quo. TUM has a crucial role to play in this regard; teachers' perception about its effectiveness in promoting their welfare is directly linked to its ability to bargain a decent pay for them.

Despite that remuneration is an important factor in teacher motivation, it is, as already alluded to, not the only one. Studies suggest that motivation is a function of a combination of other welfare issues apart from money. Iliya (2015) categorised approaches to teacher motivation into two, namely, - traditional approaches and new approaches. The traditional approaches is based on Vrooms Expectancy Theory which states that individuals are more likely to work hard if there is an anticipated reward (Iliya, 2015). Hence, the traditional approach works at improving teacher welfare and in turn motivation through improved salaries. However, Herzberg's Hygiene Theory contends that, while traditional motivation factors prevent job

dissatisfaction, they do not help in the job satisfaction of teachers. For motivation to be attained, both factors that prevent dissatisfaction and those that give satisfaction must be considered. New approaches to teacher motivation, take into account both work context factors like class size, discipline conditions of students, management relations, availability of teaching and learning resources; and basic physiological needs like money, security, and status (Iliya, 2015). In addition, other work context factors that form an important element of motivation in new approaches are professional development, recognition, and challenging responsibilities. One may argue however, that the pressing need for teachers to survive economically, has made unions to focus more on improvement of salaries in addressing teacher welfare than other motivation factors. It would be interesting to find out how much importance teachers themselves have placed on other welfare factors other than salary as having a bearing on their motivation.

## **2.6 Teachers' Unions and Teacher Welfare**

Welfare provision is a determinant of the success of any school as it is one of the factors that motivates teachers (Naluwemba, Sekuwa & Okwenje, 2016). The welfare of workers includes economic, social, and working conditions. Welfare is concerned with the total wellbeing of teachers, both at school and home (Armstrong, 2006; Jempkemoi, 2014; Odunlami & Matthew, 2014).

Jepkemoi (2014) posited that the provision of welfare to teachers is likely to increase their productivity as they become motivated. Odunlami and Matthew (2014) also agreed that the ability of a school to achieve its stated objectives, to a large extent, depends on the effective implementation of welfare packages in order to motivate the teachers and other employees. Poor conditions of living for teachers, their low

status in the society, poor salaries, constant heavy workload, and deplorable working conditions have created a lot of despair amongst teachers. This has resulted in low performance in schools. Onwu and Chika (2015) emphasised that schools should understand that a healthy and stress free teacher is a major asset to the education system and should therefore provide all school welfare services and programmes that provide motivation to teachers. Studies by Namara and Kasaija (2016), Kasivu (2020), showed that teacher unions are instrumental in enhancing the welfare of teachers through collective bargaining.

Kasivu's (2020) study on teacher protest and the effects of these protests on teacher welfare in Uganda showed that teacher unions are instrumental when it comes to improving the welfare of teachers. His study revealed that since the early 1940's teachers in Uganda have been demanding for better conditions of service through their unions. The unions have been organising protests that have contributed to an increment in teachers' salaries and better provision of living standards for teachers. The industrial actions that teacher members of a union undertake to improve welfare has contributed to an increase in the membership of teacher unions. This shows the role teacher unions play in promoting the solidarity of teachers. Kashoni (2016) who conducted a study on the influence of trade union practices on teachers' job satisfaction in public primary schools in Kenya, also found that teachers unions were very instrumental in improving the welfare of teachers and this in turn improved their job satisfaction.

The power of unions to bargain for better conditions for teachers rests on the trust teachers have in their unions. Namara and Kasaija's study (2016) found out that during teacher unions' organised protests, union members listen to their leaders

more than the government. This was shown when during the protests, the government would tell teachers to go back to work, but they would refuse until they received communication from their union leaders. This shows that there is some power shift where teachers trust their teacher union leaders more than they do the government. This only highlights that teacher unions are in a position to lobby for the better welfare of teachers through their negotiations with the government. Kasivu (2021) highlighted that the Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT) had so far succeeded in securing welfare benefits for teachers such as increased pay, better working conditions, increased allowances, promotions and running motivational programmes, which were largely achieved through collective bargaining. The question is whether the same success has been achieved by TUM in improving the welfare of teachers. This question would better be addressed by finding out the views of the membership of TUM on how successful the union has been in addressing their needs. These welfare consists of economic welfare, social welfare and work and environmental welfare.

## **2.7 Teachers Union and Teachers Economic Welfare**

Safeguarding the economic interests of its members is a basic purpose of trade unions. The union ensures that the wages are within the legal stipulated limits. Teacher unions represent teachers and defend their interests in matters of salary increment, and fringe benefits. This gives teachers a sense of security (Kasivu, 2020; Wachira & Odhiambo, 2021; Kakunta et al., 2020; Namara & Kasaija, 2016; Kashoni, 2016; Gjerde, 2016). Teacher unions seek the welfare interests of teachers through collective bargaining with employers to advocate for the improvement of the welfare of the teachers. Teachers join teacher unions to seek these benefits and to seek

protection against unfair labour treatment. Therefore, it is the role of teachers' unions to meet the welfare needs of teachers, which, in turn, enhances their motivation and improves their status. Collective bargaining over the years has improved the welfare of teachers. Unions claim that teachers who are satisfied with their pay are satisfied with their unions and their work (Gjerde, 2016).

Kasivu's (2020) study indicated that teachers in Kenya felt that KNUT had largely succeeded in securing welfare benefits for teachers through collective bargaining. Namara and Kasaija (2017) concur with Kasivu that through protests there has been incremental achievement on some aspects of teachers' welfare such as salaries and housing. Other achievements of Teachers' Protest Movements have been in areas of improving the learning environment.

However, Namara and Kasaija (2017) noted that although teacher protests have yielded some success in improving the welfare of teachers, the general welfare of teachers remains a challenge since most of the successes are a response to a particular demand and they do not cause any structural change. This points to the fact that a lot needs to be considered in the approaches the teacher unions take to negotiate change so that the welfare of the teacher should improve in a number of aspects in a significant way. The Government of Malawi has been increasing the pay of teachers almost every year, yet teachers' economic welfare has not improved much. Teachers are still complaining about their work conditions and poor remuneration. They keep on demanding for better pay, good conditions of service, payment of allowances and many others. This is why Sampson, Alfred and Konnie (2019) undertook a study to investigate whether welfare packages, specifically looking at working conditions and fringe benefits other than salary payments can

motivate teachers to improve performance. Fringe benefits refer to payments received in addition to direct wages or salaries, such as accommodation allowance, medical insurance, paid holidays, pension schemes, housing allowances et cetera. Their study found out that there was statistical significant and positive effect of working condition on teachers' job performance, and fringe benefit had significant impact and positive effect on teachers' job performance (Sampson et al., 2019). Teachers unions have to negotiate for these benefits to improve teacher welfare and job satisfaction to influence the performance of schools.

Apart from bargaining with the employer on salary increment and other monetary benefits, in countries like Kenya, South Africa, Ghana, and Uganda, teacher trade unions have established financial service schemes that provide loans to their members to ease financial difficulties. The loans offered by teachers unions are preferred to those by commercial banks, as they are interest free or offered at a very low interest (Namara & Kasaija, 2017; Kasivu, 2020).

## **2.8 Teachers Union and Teachers Social Welfare**

Apart from economic welfare, workers also need the support of their employer when in times of need like sickness and death of their family members. It is the duty of the union to defend these interests. In the event of the death of a child or spouse of the worker, the employer offers a coffin and transport contribution to help in the employee. It is the duty of the trade unions to ensure that the employees get these kinds of services (Kasivu, 2020; Maravi, 2002; Kakunta et al., 2020; Simuyaba & Chibwe, 2016).

Kasivu (2020) in his study of how teacher union strategies enhance welfare in Kenya



discovered that KNUT runs motivational programmes for teachers as a way of improving their welfare. KNUT has established motivational programmes like savings and credit cooperative societies (SACCOs), where teachers can save their money and secure loans with a very low interest. It has also established teacher investment companies and enterprises for wealth accumulation, Burial Benevolent Funds (BBFs) to help bereaved families with urgent money, and Children's Education schemes that help members settle school fees for their children or relatives. All these programmes enhance the social welfare of teachers hence motivating them.

Maravi (2002) observed that many teacher trade unions in Zambia have had challenges in the provision of social welfare support to their members due to limited finances and resources to meet the demand of their members. However, Maravi argues that teacher trade unions must work in a transparent manner so that the limited resources the union has could be shared with members in a way of sharing back the membership subscriptions to members so that they see the benefits. Unlike TUM in Malawi, other unions elsewhere in Africa like South Africa, Uganda, Ghana and Kenya have significantly performed in the provision of social welfare to their members such as medical schemes, children's education schemes, burial and benevolent funds, credit facilities and mortgages (Kakunta et al., 2020). For instance, efforts to provide teachers with medical insurance in Malawi have not seen implementation indicating that TUM has not been successful in its bargaining for the teachers' health welfare.

Wairagu's (2013) study in Kieni West District of Kenya, found out that teachers' trade unions were instrumental in fighting for teachers' benefits such as better allowances and promotion opportunities. However, social welfare benefits for members were

non-existent. These findings agree with the findings of Kakunta et al, (2020) who conducted a study on the role of teacher trade unions' in promoting welfare and sustained livelihood for their members in Zambia. They discovered that while teachers expected teacher unions to come to their aid in times of funerals, teacher trade unions did not play their role of support to bereaved members. This is related to the current study as it also aimed at finding out how TUM handles matters of social welfare of teachers in terms of facilitating the provision of medical schemes, education loans and in helping the bereaved family members of a deceased union member in accessing death gratuity.

On the hierarchy of needs, shelter is the second need that human beings need following food. Good teacher accommodation is an important priority because it provides the teacher stability and so the school and its community. Housing for teachers in Malawi has been a problem for a long time. Mazaki (2014) pointed out that universally, housing provides investment opportunities, offers shelter and improves an employee's social and cultural status. It is a symbol of achievement, and social acceptance and it has a bearing on how the employee is perceived by family and others in the community. Mazaki's study, however, revealed that in many districts in Uganda, many teachers live in squatter settlements or slums that affects their welfare and the quality of education in general. Akinmoladun and Oluwoye (2007) lamented that housing is still beyond the reach of most members of the teaching profession despite its being crucial to making teachers' work easier and enjoyable so that they may concentrate on their duties as educators. Availability of housing close to the school ensures that the teacher does not walk a long distance to school, minimizes absenteeism, late coming, and enhances a teacher's status.

Olotuah and Bobadoye (2009) examined the impact of sustainable housing provision for the urban poor by reviewing public sector interventions in Nigeria. They found out that in the urban centres in Nigeria, the problem of providing adequate housing had reached an alarming state as 75% of the urban dwellers lived in slums and conditions that were degrading to human dignity. Lowly paid employees like teachers are likely to suffer the strain of urban housing, as they cannot afford descent accommodation. A study by Butiye (2018), on the performance of trade unions in alleviating employees' disputes in Tanzania also revealed that housing teachers is a big problem as many schools do not have teachers' houses and many teachers are not provided with housing allowance. In urban areas, house rents are so expensive that teachers are forced to look for cheaper houses in crowded and noisy environments. This demotivates teachers as they feel their employer does not care about their problem.

## **2.9 Teachers Union and Teachers Work Environment Welfare**

Sampson, Konnie and Konnie (2019) posited that the quality of education depends much on the teachers recruited. To attract effective teachers, the working conditions also play a role. The working environment should be supportive, safe and pleasant. This in turn, motivates teachers to do their best. How much attention a teacher gives to students is directly influenced by the teachers' working conditions. The performance of students in the Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE) examinations has not improved much over the years. Wamba and Momezulu (2014) cite the shortage of quality teachers as affecting the education standards in Malawi and the deplorable work conditions under which teachers' work to prepare the future leaders of the country. "Although all acknowledge the potential benefits of education to development, it is in the classroom where the rubber meets the road so that this

recognition of the importance of education does not amount to a cliché” (Wamba & Mgonezulu, 2014, p. 330). Thus, the importance given to the school environment plays a crucial role in improving quality education.

Kadzamira’s (2006) study on teacher motivation and incentives in Malawi revealed that the conditions in which most teachers are working are dauntingly challenging, especially in the most remote rural areas. In the areas, Community Day Secondary (CDSSs) Schools lacked classrooms such that teaching and learning was being done under trees. The schools also lacked teaching and learning resources like laboratories, making it difficult for science teachers to teach science. As if that is not enough, in remote areas, schools lack enough teachers such that the available teachers usually have high teaching loads and it is not uncommon to see a teacher teaching subjects they did not specialise in. Teaching under unsuitable and deplorable conditions like these leads to negative effects on students’ performance. Good working conditions are crucial for the teachers’ performance in educational institutions.

Moore (2012) explored the role of school environment in teacher dissatisfaction among public school teachers in United States of America. The findings of the study exposed that a helpful school environment included the one where the administration was supportive, where rules were enforced by the principal and other teachers, which in turn, helped in management of students’ behaviour; and where there was good communication between principal and staff. Additionally, granting teachers’ sick leave and timely pay also motivates teachers. Further, the availability of school materials like laboratory equipment, pieces of chalk, textbooks and adequate furniture, and well-furnished libraries makes the job of the teacher comfortable hence

motivating them to work hard.

Wachira and Odhiambo's (2021) study on how the politics of teacher unions affect teacher benefits revealed that teacher unions have a great significance in making the work environment a better place for teachers. Kakunta et al. (2020) discovered that although teacher unions have been championing for the benefits of teachers to improve their welfare, there remains a growing concern among their members that they have not been able to achieve their objective of improving working conditions for teachers. This is the reason why some splinter unions are formed due to member dissatisfaction with the acts of the old teacher unions. The same scenario has happened in Malawi where dissatisfaction with TUM has led to the formation of a splinter union of secondary school teachers.

## **2.10 Factors that Limit the Contribution of Teacher Unions towards Improving the Welfare of Teachers**

Teacher unions have a role of uniting teachers, improving the welfare of teachers, protecting the rights of teachers, and acting as the mouthpiece of teachers. Kankuta et al (2020) argued that despite the many historical gains that teacher trade unions have achieved for a long time, there remains a growing concern that the welfare of teachers has not significantly improved. In a study on factors influencing the formation of splinter unions from the Zambia National Union of Teachers, Habeezu (2016) observed that in spite of the success made by trade unions in collective bargaining, there were a number of external and internal challenges that the unions encountered in discharging their duties. Because of such challenges, unions found it difficult to galvanise all the membership for effective bargaining and this affected their success in promoting the welfare of teachers. According to Habeezu (2016),

unions' ineffectiveness in promoting teacher welfare was one of the reasons why there was formation of splinter unions. These results are in agreement with Patillo (2012), who showed that some splinter unions were formed due to member dissatisfaction with the operations of the old teacher unions.

Kankuta et al. (2020) revealed that one of the challenges that affected unions in promoting the welfare of teachers was that there was a communication problem between the administration of the union and the members of the union. This resulted in some teachers being left alone to pursue and follow-up cases that needed the help of the teacher unions and some of the cases were directly affecting teacher welfare and their livelihood. These findings agree with Gjerde's (2016) study on teachers' perceptions of teacher associations and collective bargaining, in which informants interviewed felt that there was lack of professional respect and shared goals and outcomes among the union administrators, union members and the representatives, which became a major barrier to a strong sense of communication. Similarly, a study by Nchimbi (2018) on the trade unions performance in Tanzania revealed that union leaders did not share information with their members. Wagaki (2013) also found out in a study in Kenya that the link between the union and its members was weak such that some teachers claimed that they did not know the names of their union representatives, while others indicated that they did not know the physical address of their local union branches. It is hard for a union to represent the interests of its members and improve their welfare when there is no effective link between the union and its members providing for the smooth flow of information. . Lack of communication between union leadership and the membership will have a negative effect on the members' sense of belonging to the union and consequently, on the much needed solidarity in the union's collective bargaining efforts. This relates to

social capital theory of Bourdieu that views communication as a fundamental source of social integration. Communication enhances cooperation within the group. If people do not act cooperatively, many challenges would go unaddressed in a union and such challenges would be impossible to solve. The existence of an effective link between the union and teacher members or lack of it will also define the extent to which the latter are involved in its decisions. In this regard, the other challenge that affects the discharge of duties by unions according to Gjerde (2016) is lack of involvement of teacher members in the decisions of their trade union. This is collaborated by Kalusopa et al. (2012) whose study on trade union benefits and services in Africa revealed that in Malawi, ordinary union members complained that they were not involved, informed, or consulted on matters to do with the union, which was directly connected to the union's lack of regular meetings with its membership. No wonder, the level of union service provision was far below the satisfaction of the members (Kalusopa et al., 2012).

The other challenge to the effectiveness of trade unions in promoting the welfare of teachers according to Kankuta et al. (2020) is that teacher trade unions are only proactive when it comes to collective bargaining for improved salaries and conditions of service, but such an effort has never met the members' expectations. Gjerde's (2016) study also reported that it seemed to be the opinion of key informants that the sole reason the teachers' association and the collective bargaining process existed, was to negotiate for higher salaries for teachers. This shows that teacher unions are only active in fighting for teachers when it comes to issues to do with salary, but when other issues arise that affect teachers, unions tend to be inactive. This has affected their effectiveness and the attitude teachers have towards their unions.

Lastly, Mafisa (2017) also found out that financial challenges emanating from loss of membership, splitting of unions and mismanagement have an effect on the delivery of services by unions.

## **2.11 Summary of the Literature Review and Research Gap**

From the reviewed literature, it has been established that teacher unions are crucial in advocating for the welfare of teachers and that the quality of education depends, to a large extent, on the welfare of teachers. The review has also shown that although teacher welfare involves a variety of factors, including socio-economic matters, working conditions professional development and others, unions have concentrated on the improvement of salaries. Finally, it has been noted from the literature, that the unions' failure to address other important aspects of teacher welfare while at the same time, not achieving significant success in their collective bargaining for improved remuneration, has led to dissatisfaction among union members.

Since the effectiveness of teacher unions in promoting teacher welfare can best be measured by the members' level of satisfaction, the current study sought to explore the perceptions of teachers on the effectiveness of the Teachers Union of Malawi in promoting the welfare of secondary school teachers in the Northern Education Division of Malawi. Studies on teachers' views about the effectiveness of unions have been carried out elsewhere in the world and their findings generalised across countries. However, there has been limited inquiry that has specifically focused on the Malawi context. Even more, the few studies that exist on Malawi have focused on other aspects of teacher unionism other than teacher perceptions about the Teachers Union of Malawi. The goal of the current study was to fill this gap in



research.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter explains the research paradigm, research design, study area, sample population, sample size and sampling procedures, data collection methods, data collection instruments, pilot testing, credibility and trustworthiness of the results, ethical considerations, and data analysis techniques. The chapter also gives justification for each choice made on the methodology.

### **3.2 Research Paradigm**

Research paradigm is the basic set of beliefs or assumptions that guide the way researchers approach their investigations (Creswell, 2012). These assumptions are related to the views they hold concerning the nature of reality, the relationship of the researcher to that which he or she is studying, the role of values in a study, and the process of research itself (Creswell, 2012). The study was interpretivist in nature as it sought to understand the views of respondents regarding the reality of their profession. Interpretivism believes that knowledge and reality is socially created. It seeks to understand the interpretations of individuals about the social phenomena they interact with (Creswell, 2012). This study engaged in interpreting what teachers perceived were the roles of teacher unions, how the practices of teachers unions influence their welfare in the teaching profession and the factors they perceived to limit their union in promoting teachers welfare.

### 3.3 Research Approach and Design

The study employed a qualitative approach in understanding teacher perceptions about the Teachers Union of Malawi. The qualitative approach assumes that the individuals involved in the research situation construct reality; thus, realities exist in the form of multiple mental constructions (Fraenkel et al, 2012). This approach was found most suitable, as it offered the flexibility that resulted in an in-depth exploration of the teachers' views on the effectiveness of the Teachers Union of Malawi's practices in promoting teachers welfare and factors that limit the union from promoting the welfare of teachers. The qualitative approach is most suitable when collecting information about people's attitudes, opinions, habits or any of the variety of education or social issues (Creswell, 2012) as it allows respondents a greater opportunity to express themselves, thus, providing a better insight into human behaviour. Since this study aimed at finding out the perceptions of teachers towards their union, this approach proved to be the most suitable.

The investigation also used a case study design. According to Fraenkel et al. (2012), a case study comprises the study of just one individual, classroom, school, or organisation that will help to gain an in-depth insight in the inner workings of that unique organisation. Case study design was used because the researcher focused on one organisation that is the Teachers Union of Malawi. Using case study design, the perceptions of the members of TUM in its activities in alleviating the members' welfare was studied and finally was used to provide the opportunity for explaining the perceptions of the teachers towards them and the challenges facing these members of TUM. The research design was the approach that was most appropriate because it provided a clear and deeper insight and better understanding of the research problem.

### **3.4 Study Area**

The study was conducted in the Northern Education Division in the Northern Region of Malawi. This site was chosen based on convenience, as it was easily accessible and allowed the development of immediate rapport between the researcher and potential respondents. The familiarity of the researcher to the study area and the fact that the researcher is also a teacher in the Division gave it a further advantage.

### **3.5 Study Population**

Creswell (2012) defined target population as a group of individuals with some common defining characteristics that the researcher can identify and study. This study was carried out in northern Malawi targeting teachers of some public secondary schools in NED and some executive members of the Teachers Union of Malawi. This was so as TUM is a national teacher's trade union whose activities affect teachers in all parts of Malawi.

### **3.6 Sample Size/ Sampling Techniques**

Sample is defined by Fraenkel et al (2012) as the group on which information is obtained. The results obtained from this sample is applied to the main group that is called population. Sampling is a systematic technique of choosing a group of individuals that is small but enough to be representative of the population from which it was derived.

This study selected five schools in Northern Education Division. In each school, four

serving teacher members of TUM were interviewed to understand their perceptions on how TUM works to promote the welfare of teachers. The sample was small because of the need to report details about each individual; a large number of cases can become unwieldy and result in superficial understanding of human behaviour. Three district representatives of TUM were also interviewed to give the researcher more information from the perspective of people who are insiders of the executive committee of TUM.

In selecting the sample for the study, two main types of sampling techniques were employed. These were purposive sampling and snow balling. Purposive is when researchers intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). A sampling technique that considers the selection of homogenous individuals based on membership in a group that has defining characteristics. Purposeful sampling was viable for this study as the people who were rich in knowledge were targeted like the district representatives of TUM. In addition, it was purposive as only teachers who are members of TUM were targeted.

The study also used snowball-sampling method. Snowball sampling is a form of “purposeful sampling that typically proceeds after a study begins and occurs when the researcher asks participants to recommend other individuals to be sampled” (Creswell, 2012, p. 209). Researchers may pose this request as a question during an interview or through informal conversations with individuals at a research site. In this study, snowballing was used to track district representatives of TUM who had been recommended as having further knowledge on how TUM operates. These sample respondents were difficult to identify and locate without the recommendation of other respondents in the initial stage of the study because of their small numbers

and not being in every school. Snowballing TUM district representatives helped in getting rich data and in confirming or disconfirming information.

## **3.7 Data Collection Methods**

### ***3.7.1 Interviews***

Creswell (2012) defined an interview as when researchers ask one or more participants general questions and record their answers. The researcher then transcribes the responses, types the data, and puts them in well-labelled computer folders. The interview is an important data gathering technique involving verbal communication between the researcher and the subject. It is an important way for a researcher to check the accuracy of, to verify, or refute, the impressions he or she has gained through observation.

In this study, the participants were interviewed using a semi-structured interview guide (appendix 1). Interviews were used as they provide in-depth information and give room for a researcher to probe more by using follow up questions. However, Creswell (2012) warned that interviews have weaknesses that can interfere with study findings. Some of these weaknesses are that they provide filtered information through the views of the interviewers who summarize the participants' views in the research report (Creswell, 2012). To avoid this shortfall, when transcribing, the researcher considered every word, pause, and laugh. The other weakness is that the results can be deceptive and provide the point of view the respondent wants the interviewer to hear (Creswell, 2012). This was dealt with by reading even the nonverbal language and through methodological triangulation.

The recording devices may also develop faults and compromise the interview so the

researcher recorded the responses in a notebook in addition to using an electronic recorder. The environment for the interview was also kept conducive to allow the respondents to be free and answer the questions to the best of their knowledge and comfort.

### ***3.7.2 Document Analysis***

Documents are a valuable source of information in qualitative research. Documents can be public or private records that researchers use to obtain information about the site in a study (Creswell, 2012). They can include newspapers, minutes of meetings, formal memos, records in the public domain, and archival material in libraries. These sources provide valuable information in helping researchers understand central phenomena in qualitative studies. The advantage of using documents is that the language is official and they are ready for analysis without the necessary transcription that is required with observational or interview data (Creswell, 2012). In this study, the researcher used public documents at Teachers Union of Malawi offices like official memos about strikes as a coercive method of negotiating for the welfare of teachers, the constitution of TUM to learn more about the organisation and objectives of TUM. TUM's strategic plan was also reviewed, and circulars guiding and binding the members. Document analysis as a method also has shortfalls. For instance, some documents are inauthentic. To overcome this shortfall, the researcher made sure to use the documents that had TUM's official stamp on them or whose authenticity was verified.

## **3.8 Data Collection Instruments**

### ***3.8.1 Interview Protocol***

An interview protocol is a form planned by the researcher that contains guidelines for the process of the interview; it has a list of the questions to be asked, and a space to take notes of responses from the interviewee. It serves the purpose of reminding the researcher the questions to be asked and it provides a means for recording notes (Creswell, 2012). In this study, the interview protocol contained a caption to record essential information about the interview, statements about the purpose of the study, a reminder that participants need to sign the consent form, and a suggestion to make preliminary tests of the recording equipment (Appendix 1, and 2).

### ***3.8.2 Document Analysis Protocol***

This contained the checklist of items that was needed for document analysis to gain further knowledge on the practices of TUM in influencing the welfare and professional development of teachers (Appendix 3).

## **3.9 Pilot Testing**

After questions for interviews were developed using principles of question construction, a pilot test of the interview questions was done. Pilot testing is a procedure in which a researcher makes changes in an instrument based on feedback from a small number of individuals who complete and evaluate the instrument (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). The pilot study was done at Chibavi CDSS and it was discovered that a few questions were vague. The pilot testing helped to determine that the individuals in the sample were capable of completing the interview



and that they could understand the questions and provide necessary answers. The researcher then modified the instrument to reflect the concerns highlighted on the comments. The pilot group that provided feedback on the interview were excluded from the final sample for the study.

### **3.10 Trustworthiness of the Information**

All research must be performed in ethical manner while generating valid and reliable results (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014). Trustworthiness in research is ensured in a number of ways. The criteria that this research used to establish trustworthiness included credibility, transferability, and confirmability (Miles et al., 2014).

#### ***3.10.1 Credibility***

One way of establishing trustworthiness in a qualitative study is by maintaining credibility. Credibility looks at how the research findings reflect reality (Cohen et al., 2011). It is a fit between what researchers' record as data and what actually occurs in the natural setting that is being studied (Cohen et al., 2011). This study ensured credibility through member checking. Member checking is the asking of one or more participants in the study to review the accuracy of the research report (Fraenkel et al., 2012). The researcher went back and member checked with some of the participants to ensure that her interpretation of their thoughts and ideas reflects what was communicated during interviews.

#### ***3.10.2 Transferability***

Another way of maintaining trustworthiness in a qualitative study is through the process of creating transferability (Miles et al., 2014). This is concerned with the

extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations. This study maximised transferability through the use of thick description when reporting the findings of the study. The researcher also enhanced transferability through the careful selection of the study sample that consisted of participants representing a variety of grade levels, gender and teaching experience.

### ***3.10.3 Confirmability***

Confirmability refers to the neutrality of the study (Miles et al., 2014). Confirmability or sometimes called objectivity is achieved when the researcher's inherent bias is removed (or minimised) from the data or is at least acknowledged when it cannot be removed. The researcher achieved credibility by following an established interview protocol (see appendix 1). Member checking at the conclusion of the initial and follow up interview also added to the confirmability of the study. Also during analysis of data, the bias was minimised by listening to all sides and carefully considered the views of participants before making conclusions.

### ***3.10.4 Triangulation***

Triangulation ensured the trustworthiness of the information. Data triangulation is a strategy used to determine if findings are consistent across all participants and variables. It can be achieved through collecting data using different instruments or through different sources (Cohen et al., 2011). This study used interview protocol and documents review to triangulate data. When a conclusion is supported by data collected from a number of different instruments, its validity is thereby enhanced (Fraenkel et al., 2012).

### ***3.10.5 Saturation of Data***

Saturation of data also helps to establish trustworthiness of a qualitative study. Data saturation is achieved when data collected is enough such that no new information would be obtained through additional sampling. The researcher determined saturation by analysing patterns as data collection proceeded and the saturation was reached upon interviewing the indicated sample size hence, there was no need to add more respondents (Fraenkel et al., 2012).

### **3.11 Plan for Data Analysis Techniques**

Upon receiving the interview responses from the respondents, they were arranged systematically by transcribing the data from the audio files into text format manually. The data then was organised into document files and folders by using the research questions asked. The data was then coded by assigning patterns and properties to it (Creswell, 2012). The researcher then built on the patterns to gain in-depth insight into the data. The researcher then explored the data to obtain a general understanding of it while making some notes on them. The data was then segmented and labelled to form broad themes that related to the research questions (Creswell, 2012). The researcher then reported the findings on the research questions in form of narrative and meaning was generated while relating to literature and the theoretical framework.

### **3.12 Dissemination of the Findings**

Dissemination refers to the process of sharing research findings with stakeholders and wider audiences (Creswell, 2012). The findings will be disseminated by means of

publication in an electronic form. The Teachers Union of Malawi will receive a copy of the research report, which it may consult when considering recommendations to the Ministry of Education. Another copy will be deposited with the Mzuzu University.

### **3.13 Ethical Issues and Considerations**

In gathering data for a qualitative project, an in-depth description of a phenomenon is required. Sometimes participants are asked to talk about their personal details and their experiences over a long time. This process requires trust between the researcher and the interviewee for the participant to feel comfortable to disclose such information. As such, the researcher considered the ethical issues discussed below.

#### ***3.13.1 Confidentiality***

The status of anonymity was upheld at all stages. The identities of all who participated in this qualitative study were protected. Care was taken to ensure that none of the information collected would embarrass or harm participants.

#### ***3.13.2 Consent***

The researcher made sure that participants were always treated with respect by seeking their written consent to be interviewed. Fraenkel et al., (2012) maintained that it is especially important in qualitative studies to seek the cooperation of all subjects in the research endeavour. The subjects in this research were told of the researcher's interests and were asked for their permission to proceed. The researcher never lied to subjects nor recorded any conversations using a hidden recording device or any other clandestine mechanical apparatus. Permission was

sought from the participants to record the interview through the signing of a consent form that the researcher gave. Respondents' therefore gave information voluntarily.

The findings of this study were purely for academic purposes. Permission was sought from the school administrators who also signed a form allowing the school to participate in the study before the researcher's contact with the respondents. Permission was also sought from Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC) for clearance.

### **3.14 Chapter Summary**

The focus of Chapter three was on the research issues of methodology which were used in the study. The study engaged a qualitative design, which helped to carry out the in-depth study, the study setting was Northern Education Division, the sampling procedure was purposive, convenience and snowball, and the sample size was 23 respondents taken from union. The interview guides and documents review were used to collect data and the same data was analysed using thematic analysis. The ethical considerations were also considered.

# CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

## 4.1 Introduction

The intent of this qualitative study was to explore and better understand the teachers' perspectives on how TUM undertakings promote the welfare of teachers. This chapter presents the research data gathered during interviews with twenty-three teachers who had been in the profession for a minimum of five years in the Northern Education Division. The twenty-three individuals consisted of twenty teachers who were members of Teachers Union of Malawi (TUM), and three teachers who were administrators in TUM. The data was collected through qualitative interviews for the purpose of gaining an understanding of the perceptions of teachers toward the undertakings of TUM in facilitating the welfare of teachers. The other set of data was collected through document analysis. The researcher used pseudonyms for both the schools and participants.

## 4.2 Teachers' Perceptions on the Role of Teachers Union of Malawi in Schools

The first research objective was to examine the teachers' perception on the role of TUM in schools. Data was obtained through interviews and document analysis. The questions that were asked were: 1) what do you perceive are the roles of TUM? 2) Why did you join TUM? To validate the findings, documents were reviewed to shed more light on the roles of TUM. These documents were the TUM constitution and TUM strategic plan. The findings of the interviews and the document review generated the themes below that answer the research questions asked.

#### *4.2.1 The awareness of TUM functions in NED*

Document analysis showed that the constitution of the Teachers Union of Malawi stipulates the objectives of the union as to unite all teachers in Malawi. Additionally, to promote the profession of teachers by conducting in-service trainings (INSETs) that aim at improving methods of teaching different subjects. The other objective is to serve as the mouthpiece for the teachers to the government by bringing to their notice matters that affect teachers, like the designing of the syllabi, teachers' accommodation, and availability of teaching and learning resources; and to secure unified and better terms of service for all teachers.

During interviews, the study discovered that despite the objectives of TUM being well stipulated in its constitution, some teachers do not know them. When asked what you perceive are the roles and objectives of TUM, a teacher at School E1 (personal interview, 29 April 2022) responded,

It's hard for me to tell because we have never sat down to be told what the duties of TUM are. Though the only time I see the existence of TUM is when there are strikes otherwise I don't see TUM anywhere.

This shows that some teachers have partial knowledge about what the objectives and roles of TUM are. Their responses when asked what the objectives of TUM are, showed that TUM is there just to negotiate for better salaries. In addition, teachers showed lack of awareness about what goals TUM intends to achieve in the future. When asked what the future goals of TUM are or about its strategic plan, a certain

teacher responded:

TUM does not tell us such things. They do not communicate at all. They do not come to our schools to involve us on such issues. Ever since I started my career in 2014, I have never been told of what goals TUM has. So I can say am not aware of such goals (School A: 2, personal interview, 11 April, 2022).

The other respondents also stated that they have never come across TUM's strategic plan or heard of TUM's future goals. This shows that there is lack of proper link and communication between TUM and its grassroots members. In the absence of proper communication, TUM is unlikely to be in a position to sensitise teacher members about its goals, plans, and activities. Frequent sensitisation visits to schools would enhance members' knowledge about the Union. Teachers proved to be in the dark about what drives their Union and this had a negative impact on their perception of TUM. Teachers also demonstrated lack of a sense of ownership of the union, as they did not feel involved in it. This can be cited as one of the reasons that makes TUM fail to effectively promote the welfare of teachers because for unions to succeed in their objectives, they must conduct meetings with their members through which they can hear their views. In this way, they can affect the desired changes in the union that are beneficial to the welfare of teachers. Social Capital Theory by Bourdieu (1984), points out that among those tangible substances that make or count for most in the daily lives of people in a community, is the social interconnectedness among the individuals and families who make it a social unit.

Respondents also demonstrated that they did not know what the objectives of TUM are except that of negotiating for salary adjustment. They stated that they were not



aware of the objectives of TUM as they are not involved in the planning of TUM's strategic plan. Some respondents attributed this unawareness to lack of information on the issue as many teachers are made to join TUM by default and are not oriented on what TUM is and what its roles and objectives are. Teachers felt that TUM does not ask them for input in creating future goals. Some interviewees felt that the goals of a union are something that should be reviewed by both teachers and TUM leadership to ensure that the goals are addressing issues that really affect teachers in their work environment. The non-involvement of teachers in defining the Union's goals and objectives goes against Bourdieu's Social Capital Theory, which states that a social network, in this case, a union, may be socially instituted and guaranteed by the application of a whole set of instituting acts designed simultaneously to form and inform those who undergo them (Bourdieu, 1982). This theory suggests that members of the union need to be informed of the goals of the union and the objectives for the formation of the organisation. In this way, they will feel a sense of belonging to the group and this will shape their positive perception of the union.

The findings of this study concur with Butiye's (2018) study on the investigation of performance of trade unions, in which the majority of the respondents indicated that they were not aware of the functions of their trade union. Butiye recommended that trade unions should implement strong awareness programmes and campaigns on the functions, obligations and operations of the unions so that members are made aware of the duties, responsibilities, functions, operations and obligations of their union. In other studies, however, respondents were generally knowledgeable about the duties of their union, such as in a study by Bakokor and Antwi (2020) on the perception of workers on trade union activities. This is contrary to the findings of this study where many respondents expressed unawareness of the objectives of TUM.

#### ***4.2.2 TUM Involved in Performing Traditional Roles***

Kalusopa et al. (2012) categorised the roles played by unions as traditional and non-traditional. The traditional roles of trade unions are geared towards the betterment of the position of the members in relation to their employment. Therefore, these roles measure adequate wages, better conditions of work and employment through the collective bargaining process. The study found out that teachers perceived that TUM performed the traditional roles towards improving their welfare.

The respondents expressed that the role of TUM that is mostly felt is that of bargaining for salary increment. They indicated that the role of TUM focuses much on fighting for the welfare of teachers through salary rise and some allowances of teachers.

I have seen TUM advocating for salary increment through the media and discussions with the ministry. At one point in time, I was listening to a radio where TUM was calling out to the government to consider an increase of salaries as well as this other time when it was calling for government to assist with the risk allowance for teachers during COVID pandemic crisis. Well the COVID allowance never materialised (School A2, personal interview, 11 April 2022).

The study revealed that TUM has effectively performed traditional roles a union is supposed to perform. Teachers expressed that TUM leaders are active in negotiating for these traditional roles. This entails that TUM has been effective in performing some of its duties to bargain for the benefits of teachers. This effectiveness of TUM has been instrumental in shaping a positive perception of teachers towards TUM.

This relates to Bourdieu's Social Capital Theory that states that every group has its more or less institutionalized forms of delegation to represent the group, to speak and act in its name and so, with the aid of this collectively owned capital, to exercise a power incommensurate with the agent's personal contribution (Bourdieu, 1983). This means that the leaders who have been chosen by TUM members to represent them in lobbying for their welfare have been efficient and have been able to improve the welfare of teachers hence shaping a good perception of members towards their union.

However, the study discovered that the perceived aim of TUM and the actual role expected by their members provide contrasting views. In response to a question about the role of TUM, many respondents believe that TUM is very much concerned with salary adjustment and that other roles that TUM is supposed to perform are being neglected. One of the respondents mentioned that "in fact the presence of TUM is seen when it comes to salaries that's where the end results of TUM intervention is seen" (school B1, personal interview, 29 April 2022).

Respondents expressed the view that TUM should also focus on uniting teachers, as it is one of its objectives. The study revealed that there is a division of members of TUM due to the perceived ineffectiveness of TUM in dealing with issues that concern secondary school teachers. On this note one respondent had this to say:

In general TUM is taken as an organisation for primary school teachers because most of the problems that are taking place or are there in secondary schools are not being handled seriously by TUM.(School A: 4, personal interview, 11 April, 2022).

This division in TUM has led to the formation of a splinter union called Secondary

School Teachers Union (SESTU) that aims at representing secondary school teachers. This shows that TUM has been inadequate in uniting teachers, as one of its objectives is to unite teachers.

Furthermore, despite the fact that TUM is performing its job in negotiation of better salaries, the study revealed that these roles are not enough to motivate teachers, as teachers need other motivational benefits that would improve their welfare as these negotiated salaries are not enough. Teachers expressed that the Union can motivate teachers by provision of opportunities for professional training and the provision of assorted loans to members that can greatly improve the welfare of teachers. A certain teacher respondent stated that, "TUM should lobby to the government to make sure that teachers have access to big loans for mobility ... these loans should be at a very low interest rate" (School C1, personal interview, 4 May, 2022). TUM needs to move in to cushion their members by broadening their scope of trade unionism from the traditional activities. Unions have to strive to perform both the traditional and non-traditional roles. These findings are in line with Kalusopa et al. (2012) who observed that TUM is effective in its traditional role, however, unions in Malawi need to also provide welfare measures in order to improve the morale of workers and generate self-confidence among them.

Zammit (2012) suggested that because of their work and experiences, trade union members might develop a set of assumptions that provide a paradigm within which they expect their organisation to function. This shows that if the expectations of the union members on the perceived roles of the union are not met, members develop a negative perception of their union. Bourdieu's Social Capital Theory intimates that every union or organisation has a set of objectives designed to inform those who

undergo them to enact and reinforce them (Bourdieu, 1982). Likewise, TUM has objectives that its members expect it to achieve and its effectiveness in achieving these objectives shapes the perception teachers have of the organisation.

### **4.3 Perceptions of Teachers on TUM's Ability to Safeguard Teachers' Welfare in Public Secondary Schools**

The second research objective was to examine the perceptions of teachers on TUM's ability to safeguard teachers' welfare in public secondary school. Interviews were used to obtain information. The aim of the questions asked was to determine the perception of teachers on the ability of TUM to promote their economic, social, and environmental welfare. The information obtained was further consolidated by document reviews of TUM's memos, minutes and letters to the Ministry of Education. The data produced the following themes that answer the research question asked.

#### ***4.3.1 Economic Welfare***

The study solicited views from the respondents to determine their perceptions on TUM's ability to safeguard teachers' economic welfare in public secondary schools.

##### ***4.3.1.1 Salary Increment***

Salary is one of the main motivating factors of a job. Adequate salaries help to prevent job turnovers. The study aimed at finding out the perceptions of teachers on the influence of TUM in improving their salaries. The study found out that TUM played a role of representing the teachers in collective bargaining that resulted in salary increments, which improves the economic welfare of teachers. When asked what role TUM plays in advocating for better salaries, some teachers stated that

sometimes when the government communicates the annual salary increment for a particular year, if teachers are not satisfied, TUM tries to negotiate with the government for the salary increment to be readjusted.

This reveals that sometimes before the government announces the salary increment, it meets with various unions of civil servants to discuss and agree on the proposed increment. This is when the unions bargain for more if the percentage is low. When salaries improve, it helps shape a positive perception of the union by the teachers. The study also discovered that TUM sometimes uses the media to lament the poor working conditions of teachers and attracts sympathy from the public, which then influences the government to improve some of the conditions. This is what one respondent had to say:

I have seen TUM advocating for better salaries through the media... TUM was calling out to the government to consider an increase of salaries. TUM was complaining about the substandard living conditions of teachers on the media. After some time the government allowed the endorsement of rural allowance to teachers (School D2, personal interview, 9 May, 2022).

This shows that teachers felt that TUM is effective in safeguarding teachers' economic welfare in terms of salaries. This was also collaborated by TUM officials who indicated that they really play a great role in bargaining for better salaries. When asked what role TUM plays in advocating for better salaries official 3 responded that

TUM under Malawi Congress of Trade Union (MCTU) bargained for a 25% increment. The government said we are giving you 6

%. So later on when they discussed they argued the government then said let us agree on 12%. That is why we have 12... if TUM was not there we must have got the 6% (TUM official 3, personal interview, 19 May 2022).

This revealed that TUM through collective bargaining negotiates for salary increment that in turn promotes the welfare of teachers. These findings agree with Kasivu (2020) whose study revealed that 81.9 percent of teachers strongly agreed that KNUT in Kenya fights for increased pay for teachers. The findings also concurred with Oke whose study findings were that the only well-known function of TTU in Tanzania is that of negotiating with the government for salary increments (Oke, 2009).

Despite this achievement of TUM, teachers still complained that the salaries they receive are still not enough to cater for their everyday needs. One teacher lamented that

Yes, TUM negotiates with government on the percentage of increment every year. However, the prices of goods in Malawi are becoming higher and higher making the increment not effective with our economy. What is needed is a much satisfying salary (School C: 3 personal interview, 4, May, 2022).

This reveals that despite the effort that TUM pulls in to bargain for better salaries, teachers' salaries are still one of the major challenges to the realisation of teacher welfare. This can also attributed to the economy of the country rather than to the effectiveness of the union. This is also escalating because unlike other government workers who have access to some allowances apart from their salary to cushion

them, teachers entirely depend on their salary (Butiye, 2018) hence the demand by a respondent in the current study for “a much satisfying salary.”

Namara and Kasaija (2017) noted that although teacher protests have yielded some successes in improving the welfare of teachers, the general welfare of teachers remains a challenge since most of the successes are a response to a particular demand and they do not cause any structural change. Likewise, the teacher respondents in this study indicated that the Government of Malawi has been increasing teachers’ salaries almost every year, yet the salaries have not been adequate to better their livelihood. This shows that the economic welfare of teachers keeps on being a challenge. Hence, teachers keep on complaining about their work conditions and poor remuneration. This point to the fact that the teacher unions need to rethink the approaches they take in negotiating change so that there is permanent improvement in the welfare of teachers. Bourdieu’s Social Capital Theory proposes that social relations power depends largely upon the active quest of individuals and groups to activate and use this capital (Bourdieu, 1984). The skills unions use to negotiate with the employer to improve the welfare of the members determine the success of their quest.

#### *4.3.1.2 Arrears and Leave Grants*

Document review has shown that TUM has on a number of occasions written to the government to demand the government to pay teachers leave grants or arrears. In certain situations, TUM had even written to the government to inform it of intended industrial action due to the same. For instance, on 2 July 2018, TUM wrote the Ministry of Education a memo to inform it that there would be a nation-wide strike for all teachers as the government had failed to solve issues of salary arrears, promotion,



and salary increment (Appendix 7)

During interviews, teachers stated that the issue of leave grants is well addressed while that of arrears has been outstanding. The government owes teachers who had changed their grades large sums of money in arrears. Teacher respondents claimed that TUM has been silent on the issue of arrears. As one respondent put it, "Our money is losing its value yet there is nothing we can do anymore since even TUM is not on our side" (School C1 personal interview, 4 May, 2022). On the same issue, another respondent lamented that

The government has been dragging its feet to pay us our arrears. We have been writing TUM on the issue of arrears but nothing has materialised so far. Imagine I changed grade in 2019 May. My change of grade salary was effected in 2020 June. However, up to now I have not been given my arrears of 13 months although I have been applying for several times (School B2, personal interview, 29 April, 2022).

The study findings, reveal that teachers felt that the pressure TUM was exerting on the government to pay teachers their arrears was either minimal or non-existent and that teachers were losing hope of ever being paid the arrears they had accumulated. To the knowledge of teachers, TUM had not produced any letter demanding the government to pay teachers their arrears. This could also be attributed to the lack of communication between the TUM leadership and members already alluded to in this study. Since TUM, leadership did not communicate about the initiatives that it was taking to solve issues of arrears; members took it that TUM was silent on this. Teachers felt that if TUM could exert pressure on the government by threatening to

withdraw labour until outstanding arrears were honoured, the government would relent and pay teachers what they were owed and TUM did this according to document review. These findings concurred with Butiye (2018) whose study concluded that the majority of members of a union are not satisfied with the performance of the trade unions, in terms of negotiations and operations of the unions. These findings however are different from those of Zammit (2002) who revealed that trade unions are seen primarily as agents constantly striving to improve the conditions of work of their members through bargaining and negotiation. This role of unions is reinforced by the notion that affluence is not a divinely ordained privilege, but is something that can be achieved by a social group through social engineering of the market value of work. This also agrees with Bourdieu's social capital theory that suggests that collective assets of a social group can be used by the members of the network (Bourdieu, 1982). In this case, teachers as a collective force can fight and improve their welfare if they make use of their union efficiently. Thus through the union the welfare of teachers can improve and with it the perception of the union by its members. However, in as far as promoting their economic welfare in terms of getting the government to pay salary arrears was concerned; teacher members did not perceive TUM effective.

#### *4.3.1.3 Financial Facilities*

Lack of teachers' financial stability has made the teaching profession to lose its status in the Malawian society. Unions need to need to put in place initiatives that would boost the financial standing of teachers. Providing loans to teachers to build houses, buy cars or start up a business would be beneficial to teachers.

Results from the study's quest to determine whether TUM facilitated access to

financial services by teachers revealed that teachers felt that TUM has no activities that enhance teachers' access to financial services. When asked if TUM activities succeeded in ensuring that teachers had access to financial services and loans, many teachers answered that they were not aware, while others said no. However, teachers indicated that TUM needed to play a role in facilitating access to financial services as part of promoting teachers' economic welfare. Some of the interviewed teachers had this to say:

TUM should lobby to the government to make sure that teachers have access to big loans for car for mobility especially teachers who stay far away from their duty station because of housing issues. They can also negotiate for loans for housing scheme. It is not on for teachers to wait up to retirement to manage to build a house (School C1, personal interview, 5 May, 2022).

Thus, the study revealed that TUM did not render or facilitate access to any financial help to teachers. These findings agree with Kalusopa et al. (2012) whose study concluded that unions in Malawi have performed poorly in the provision of benefits to their members. This is so because there is a narrow view of trade unionism in Malawi that is confined to workplace issues. Their study revealed that unions in Malawi have not broadened their view to start investments and large-scale businesses as a means of raising funds to provide benefits that may attract members and increase levels of members' satisfaction with the union. These measures may include provision of assorted loans to members of the union so that members also benefit from the membership fee they contribute.

The findings that TUM did not facilitate the provision of financial services to member teachers are contrary to the findings of Kankuta et al. (2020) whose study revealed that trade unions in Zambia provided loan facility empowerment to their members. These unions introduced loan schemes that improved the welfare of teachers by giving them land empowerment loans and building materials loans. Kalusopa et al. (2012) also noted that many trade unions have established financial schemes for teachers that seek to provide their members financial help when need arises. These financial schemes are different from those banks offer as they are below the market interest rate and sometimes are provided with no interest at all.

#### ***4.3.2 Social Welfare***

The study also aimed at finding out if TUM had the ability to safeguard the social welfare of teachers. Respondents explained that they encounter different problems that affect their social wellbeing. Below are some of the problems teachers face.

##### ***4.3.2.1 Housing***

Teachers' accommodation has been one of the challenges that has for a long time affected quality education in Malawi. The situation is so dire in some areas that teachers commute from distant places where they rent houses to their duty stations. It is the duty of the employer to provide good housing for teachers. However, the government has neither constructed adequate houses for teachers nor provided housing allowances to teachers. Teachers felt that TUM as their union needed to have taken an active role in lobbying for housing projects for teachers if education were to improve. When asked what challenges they faced as teachers that would need TUM intervention, the teachers mentioned that they have housing problems;

they have to find their own housing and pay for rents, as schools do not have houses. This is difficult as despite yearly increments, salaries are hardly adequate for teachers to afford decent housing, and at the same time afford daily needs as prices of commodities keep rising. What is more, teachers are not provided with house allowance. In some very remote schools, the problem is so dire that teachers posted there find it difficult to find a standard house to rent. This has contributed to teacher turnover and the shortage of teachers in rural areas as many teachers opt to stay in towns. Despite that, the government introduced rural allowance for teachers in rural areas; many teachers still prefer to teach in towns as they consider that the rural allowance is not enough to entice them to teach in villages where they find very poor accommodation among other challenges. One participant had this to say:

Teachers reside far away from schools and this time we know the government is constructing houses for police officers, I feel that this project should be extended to teachers as well. Therefore, I feel like TUM should take advantage of that and lobby to the government so that teachers should have houses (School E1, personal interview, 11 May, 2022).

Documents review of TUMs advocacy strategy 2017 discovered that the coming in of free primary education came with a number of problems like inadequate teacher houses within the institutional locality forcing some teachers to rent in the communities in glass thatched and mud floor houses that demotivates many teachers. In its priority advocacy issues 2017-2022, lack of adequate teacher houses was to be minimized. The problem of housing is still crucial up to now.

The study revealed that respondents considered the issue of housing to be a critical

one and that TUM needed to take an active role in solving this problem through negotiations and partnership with the government. The study also revealed that some primary and secondary schools have enough land within the school boundaries where teacher's houses could be built by teacher unions in partnership with government and the community. The findings relate to similar studies on teacher unions in neighbouring countries. Kankuta et al. (2020) found that the issue of accommodation for teachers was a problem in Zambia. National teacher trade unions officials acknowledged lack of innovations to consider the idea of building houses in schools that in the long run help teachers rent their own teacher trade unions housing units. In a study on teachers' attitudes on the effectiveness of Tanzania Teachers Union in improving teachers' welfare teachers felt that the union was not doing enough to bargain with the government to solve issues of houses that were poorly maintained (Rhadhi, 2021).

As Oke (2009) observed, trade unions are supposed to be their members' job security and ensure that their members have a healthy and safe working environment. Universally, housing is accepted as the second most important human need after food and it is more than just shelter. Apart from providing investment opportunities housing is a symbol of achievement and social acceptance; it controls in some way, the manner in which the employee is perceived by family and others in the community. Since housing is still beyond the reach of most teachers, their status in society remains low.

One of the objectives of TUM is to serve as a mouthpiece for its members to the government, Ministry of Education, and educational authorities by bringing to their notice, matters affecting teachers' accommodation (TUM constitution). The fact that

TUM has not been able to bring a positive change on the issue of teachers accommodation, can count as one of the reasons for the negative perceptions teachers have towards TUM.

#### *4.3.2.2 Motivational Programmes*

Teachers need to be motivated to work hard to ensure quality education. When asked if TUM has any motivational programs for teachers, many teachers stated that there was none they knew of. This is one of the indications TUM members cited to demonstrate that TUM was not helping them perform their duties. Members of the union believed that their union should have teacher motivation programmes. During the interviews with the teachers, they claimed that TUM mostly motivated those who held positions in the TUM leadership hierarchy and not everyone.

Teacher unions are key players in harnessing teacher motivation to produce higher levels of performance in education. In spite of this, the study revealed that TUM did not have programmes that motivated teachers. This scenario is different from the Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT), which Kasivu (2020), reported to have established motivational programmes for teachers. KNUT had established motivational programmes like savings and credit cooperative societies (SACCOs), teacher invested companies and enterprises for wealth accumulation, Burial Benevolent Funds (BBFs) to help bereaved families with urgent money, and Children's Education schemes, which helped members settle school fees for their dependents.

TUM's inability to provide motivational programmes has been a demotivation factor to teachers as they felt that their job was not giving them the satisfaction they needed. There is high degree of consensus that welfare benefits play an important

role in motivating teachers, in their job satisfaction and consequently in improving teaching and learning (Mutuku, 2015; Onwu and Chuka. 2015).

#### *4.3.2.3 Disbursement of Death Gratuity*

The study showed that TUM did not play any role in supporting the bereaved family when a teacher member died. The study further revealed that the family of a deceased TUM member encountered so many difficulties in accessing death gratuity as it took a long time for the family members to be done with the process. Some teachers explained that they had never heard of TUM helping in processing of death gratuity and that it remained a very big problem, as many beneficiaries were not getting their death gratuity in time. The teachers stated that TUM needed to play a role in helping with the process of accessing death gratuity. Respondents lamented that when a teacher passed on; their family members struggled to go to responsible offices so that they could get all the needed documentation for the processing of death gratuity.

This demonstrated that the lack of the involvement of TUM in time of bereavement made teachers feel unsupported in their times of need. Some beneficiaries do not even know where or how to go about starting the process. This is in agreement with Kankuta et al. (2020) whose study revealed that teachers felt alone in matters that needed their unions' intervention and the union officials were inaccessible.

#### *4.3.3 Working Conditions*

Most of the causes of teacher turnover in Malawi can be attributed to their poor working conditions. The conditions in which most teachers are working in Malawi are unnerving and very challenging. These range from lack of classrooms, inadequate



teaching, and learning materials and poor housing conditions. These factors have a bearing on the teachers' motivation and affect the quality of education.

#### *4.3.3.1 Availability of Teaching and Learning Resources*

Teaching and learning resources are very important in the delivery of education. Making sure that schools have adequate teaching and learning resources is one of the objectives of TUM. TUM advocacy plan 2017-2019 endeavoured to achieve quality education through ensuring that schools had adequate teaching and learning materials. However, the study revealed that TUM did not play any role in ensuring that schools had adequate teaching and learning resources. When asked what role TUM played to facilitate the availability of funds for teaching and learning resources teachers indicated that TUM did nothing in facilitating the process of getting funds from the government. This affected the quality of education as teachers observed that there were some teaching resources that could not be made using locally available resources. The absence of school funds for teaching and learning resources affected the way teachers delivered lessons that needed such resources. A certain respondent explained that

TUM has no role on ensuring the availability of funds for teaching and learning resources in schools. I have a good example, in this school we receive money from the government we call it ORT. So for the last academic year we have not received this funding from the government but TUM is saying nothing and doing nothing about it (School A1, personal interview, 4 April, 2022).

TUM's inability to lobby for the availability of teaching and learning resources in

schools echoes earlier observations in this study that unions have limited their role to issues of remuneration. Lack of resources in schools, especially in rural areas, makes the classroom environment un conducive for teaching and learning. This poses a serious challenge to attaining quality education. A study on teacher motivation and incentives in Malawi by Kadzamira (2006) noted that the working environment in the majority of schools was deplorable, with dilapidated school structures, insufficient teaching and learning materials. Sampson, Konnie and Konnie (2019) asserted that the quality of education depends, in a big way, on the working conditions of the teacher. The working environment of the teachers need to be supportive, safe and pleasant. This in turn motivates teachers to do their best. The amount of attention a teacher gives to students is directly influenced by the teachers' working conditions. Moore (2012) investigated the role of school environment in teacher dissatisfaction among public school teachers in the U.S.A. He found out that teachers who perceive a more positive school environment have more control over their classrooms , are more satisfied with their jobs, and have a' positive perception of their unions.

#### *4.3.3.2 Legal Representation*

Membership of a trade union gives an individual worker access to advice and other assistance from the union in a number of work related contexts. Teachers need legal representation when caught up in a situation that requires a lawyer. In the study, many teachers indicated that TUM provided legal representation when need arose. When asked what role TUM played in enabling member teachers' access legal representation, teacher respondents mentioned that TUM had a lawyer who represented teachers in such cases. An interview with a TUM official also revealed that the Union represented teachers legally when need arose. One teacher

respondent explained the following:

I can give an example I was at one time interdicted because of a minor issue. Somebody had reported that I have done something bad that I was almost interdicted but TUM came to my rescue. I will never leave TUM. They had to bring in a lawyer and had to stand for me and then I was bailed out because of TUM but otherwise my job would have ended a long time ago. I am working because of TUM (School D2, personal interview, 9 May, 2022).

The findings of the study thus revealed that TUM represented teachers in legal matters, which in turn, gave teachers a sense of job security. The findings concurred with a study by Kathoni (2016) on the influence of trade unionism on teachers job satisfaction in Kenya whose findings were that teachers felt satisfied with their jobs when teacher unions offered them legal representation.

#### *4.3.3.3 Promotions*

The issue of promotions of teachers has been of major concern to teachers for a very long time. Many people who have upgraded their qualifications are finding it difficult to be promoted to a new grade. This has caused so much frustration to those teachers who were supposed to be promoted and is demotivating to teachers who want to develop professionally. The study revealed that TUM played some role in facilitating the promotion of teachers. During interviews, some respondents mentioned that TUM is able to champion the promotion of teachers through negotiations with the government. They cited the 2019 mass promotion of teachers that though seemingly political, were championed by TUM. In 2019, the government

promoted about 20,000 teachers from both primary and secondary school. The TUM general secretary by then added that the union was in agreement with the government to start promoting teachers without subjecting them to interviews. Respondents felt that TUM played a crucial role in these promotions

Document review also revealed that TUM had been championing for the promotion of teachers repeatedly. On 2 January 2014, TUM wrote a letter to the Ministry of Education expressing its dismay over the fact that some long serving teachers were left out of promotions. TUM demanded the Ministry to promote some more teachers who had served for a long time on the same grade. In 2018, TUM wrote the Ministry of Education of their intent to conduct a nationwide strike over issues of promotions. This revealed that TUM had been taking initiatives in the promotion of teachers (Appendix 7).

The study also revealed that many respondents thought that TUM's effort in influencing the promotion of teachers was not enough as many teachers remained without being promoted despite serving on the same grade for a long period. When asked what role TUM played in facilitating the promotion of teachers, one respondent intimated:

Actually, there is nothing tangible that TUM had done in assisting teachers on promotions. In fact, I am one of the victims. I am serving at a lower grade that is not matching my credentials. We have consulted TUM to assist us but there is nothing they are doing (School A2, personal interview, 4 April, 2022).

Other teacher participants stated that the issue of promotion was a problem as many

teachers had been left out in the most recent promotions of 2022 despite upgrading themselves. Some teacher participants observed that while TUM facilitated the promotions, it was not doing enough on that, otherwise, many teachers would have been promoted. The respondents claimed that there were many teachers out there who have been on the same grade for over 15 years. "If TUM was doing its job that wouldn't have been the case. Also many people have upgraded themselves but they have not yet been promoted and TUM has been silent" (School D2, personal interview, 7 April, 2022).

The study revealed that teachers felt that the role TUM was playing to ensure that teachers were promoted within the right time was minimal as many teachers still struggled to get a promotion. The study also established that TUM had been negotiating with the government to promote teachers, however, the government released few and sparse vacancies of promotions making it difficult to promote many teachers who had been waiting for a change of grade for a long time. The study also found that respondents felt frustrated, especially self-upgraded teachers, who had been left to fight for promotion alone; as their plea to get TUM involved in the issue had been received with silence from the Union. These challenges teachers expressed have also been documented in the Malawi Vision 2063 in which it is observed that the public sector in Malawi has faced a number of challenges like unmerited promotions and a demoralising career progress structure. The Vision 2063 aims at conducting merit based promotions done in an open and transparent manner. These would give a chance to all deserving teachers to be promoted and this can happen if TUM negotiated with the government and the latter implemented changes espoused in the Vision document. If unions do not apply enough pressure to the government to bargain for better terms, change would not be realised. Employees

join a union because individually they are not powerful enough to request for their privileges at the workplace (Dinyuy & Ugur, 2021). They depend on the enormous collective power of unions to demand their privileges and rights.

If unions cannot harness their power to make sure that teachers enjoy the privileges and rights of their job, they cannot be effective in representing their members, and this may shape the way members perceive them. TUM's relationship with its membership can only be enhanced if the latter sees tangible improvement in opportunities for promotion, which is an important motivational factor. As Bourdieu's Social Capital Theory suggests, positive changes occur when social relationships within the communities are benevolent (Bourdieu, 1983).

#### **4.4 Teachers Perceptions of the Factors that Limit TUM from Effectively Promoting their Welfare**

The aim of this third objective was to determine teachers' perception on the factors that limit TUM from effectively promoting the welfare of teachers. Data was obtained through interviews. The aim of the questions asked was to discover what teachers perceive are the challenges that limit the effectiveness of TUM in promoting the welfare of teachers. Document analysis further validated the findings and the following themes were generated from the data.

##### ***4.4.1 Communication Gap between TUM Administrators and Teacher Members***

Communication between union leadership and teacher members is needed to attain a collegial atmosphere with the shared goal of maintaining and improving the welfare of the teacher. What emerged from the interviews with participants was that TUM did

not have any meetings during the school year to get feedback from the group they represent. In addition, that TUM representative are not known to the members and are inaccessible. It was evident that TUM members felt the lack of communication and meetings prohibited the association from promoting the welfare of teachers.

#### *4.4.1.1 Inaccessible Union Officials*

The study found out that the participants felt that the people who represented TUM in zones or at the district level were inaccessible. They felt that when they encountered problems that required the help of TUM, they did not know how to go about it to seek help and who to approach. As such, teachers became frustrated with issues, which they could not solve on their own. When asked what they thought TUM should do to make sure issues of teacher welfare were taken into consideration, School A2 (personal interview, 4 April, 2022) had this to say:

I feel like the channel of communication is not vibrant. The channel of communication is bad on its own because teachers do not know who their representatives are. They do not know when and how they can convey their grievances. Therefore, in that case there is a great problem.

This shows that there is a large gap between teacher members of TUM and the TUM officials. In addition, this gap and lack of contact between the two affects the welfare of teachers as issues that affect teachers in their daily working environment are not presented to the union representatives who can in turn present the issues to the responsible officers to solve. School B2, (personal interview, 29 April, 2022) also observed:

Yah! I can say that there is a very large gap between the members and the executive because for them to have a meeting with teachers its very rare... it is quite a long ago when we heard that TUM is having a meeting with the members so that they can sensitise them on what is being planned.

Meetings, as shown in the interview by School B2 above, are an effective way of maintaining contact between the Union executive and the general membership. Regular meetings ensure that the leadership is available and accessible to the general membership thereby promoting a sense of connectedness between the parties, but also a vibrant presence of the Union wherever members are. When the leadership is available through meetings, important information and decisions can be relayed to members and feedback obtained. A study by Kalusopa et al. (2012) on trade union services and benefits in Malawi, revealed that lack of regular meetings for members to effectively engage with their union leaders, resulted in a disjuncture between union leaders and the members. Bourdieu's Social Capital Theory states that among those tangible substances that make or count for most in the daily lives of people is social interconnectedness among the individual and families who make it a social unit.

#### *4.4.1.2 No Accessible Physical Offices*

The inaccessibility of the TUM leadership to the general membership was exacerbated by the absence of Union offices at the zone, district, or regional level where members could have access to the leadership. Respondents mentioned that TUM had no physical offices anywhere near its members as one of them observed thus:



In fact, I should say that TUM should actually establish strong grassroots structures so that actually teachers should meet to discuss their problems till the grievances reach the main office. We have a big problem since TUM does not have offices at grassroots levels and mostly the representatives are inactive (School B3, personal interview, 29 April, 2022).

Although representatives were available to ensure the Union's grassroots presence, such presence was ineffectual as respondents pointed out that the representatives were inactive. The representatives were also far apart and therefore difficult to reach, more especially, that they did not have offices. This meant that teachers were not in a position to have their issues addressed where immediate attention to these issues was needed. The lack of offices also prevented that form of professional connectedness and intercourse that should define a union necessary for members to discuss issues affecting them and their profession. Furthermore, having offices where members could go to meet their welfare and professional needs was necessary to promote their sense of belonging. Without maintaining visible offices where its members were, TUM's presence at the grass root could as well be deemed to have been ceremonial, and not a vibrant, operating one. Maintaining a close link with the membership would be a tall order in a situation where TUM offices remained only in the capital, Lilongwe. Teachers form perhaps the largest number of public servants such that the need for the Union to maintain an effective operational structure through tangible offices cannot be overstressed. The establishment and maintenance of a union depends much on the proximity of its members (Bourdieu, 1983).

TUM, through its strategic plan of 2014-2016 expressed its intent to make its

structures operational by establishing offices at the education division and district levels by 2016. However, at the expiry of the strategic plan period in 2016, TUM had not achieved this objective. Six years later, in 2022 teachers still complained of the Union's lack of physical offices at the grassroots. Grassroot offices would address the communication gap between the Union executive and its members, facilitate holding of meetings, promote the membership's involvement in Union decision-making and activities and nurture connectedness and solidarity among several other advantages. The lack of offices resulted in lack of interconnection between the Union and its members, which in turn affected the perceptions of teachers towards their union. Bourdieu's Social Capital Theory proposed that the profits, which accrue from membership in a group, are the basis of the solidarity, which makes them possible (Bourdieu, 1986). This shows that the effectiveness of the union depends on the solidarity between the union leaders and the members. If the members develop a negative perception of their union due to the ineffectiveness of the union leadership, it may lead to the failure of the union in achieving its goals.

Although teachers complained that they found it difficult to bring their issues to TUM for addressing because of the inaccessibility of TUM officials and lack of physical offices, some TUM officials felt that teachers failed to seek assistance from the Union because of their negative attitude. This is in spite of the fact that the problem of the Union's accessibility had been acknowledged in its strategic documents. One of the officials when interviewed pointed out that

the problem lies with some teachers who have a negative attitude towards TUM and because of that, they will not go to ask for help from TUM. Teachers do not come forward to ask so sometimes TUM finds problems as to where are we going to

start from as TUM in helping the teachers (personal interview, 19 May, 2022).

Nevertheless, the issue of access cannot be parried away as it remained visibly clear and needed addressing as evident in the TUM 2014-2016 strategic plan. TUM also needed to find out the root of teachers' negative attitudes towards the Union and work on strategies of improving them. Members' negative perceptions are likely to occur when they feel that the union is not meeting their welfare needs. Gibney et al. (2018) note that how a union operates influences the attitudes of the union members. The perception of teachers towards their union determines the amount of their participation in union activities. If every teacher develops a negative perception of the union, there will be no participation at all in the union and this will lead to the failure of the organisation and the goals it stands for. Bourdieu's social capital theory advises that the

“existence of a network of connections (a union) is not a natural given, or even a social given. ...It is the product of an endless effort at institution, of which institution rites, mark the essential moments which is necessary in order to produce and reproduce lasting, useful relationships that can secure material or symbolic profits” (Bourdieu, 1982, p. 22).

This shows that to make a union work, the efforts of every member in that union are beneficial to the union. The division inside the union leads to its weakening. Thus, the union should work to improve its efficiency so that the teachers should develop a good attitude so as to work together to improve the welfare of teachers.

#### *4.4.1.2 Lack of Information from Union Officials*

The other issue that was revealed on the factors that limit TUM from promoting the welfare of teachers was the lack of information from TUM officials. Teachers felt that TUM did not communicate to them on important issues or plans. Teachers mentioned that they felt left out when they did not get communication from TUM on important issues. Some schools visited even claimed that they did not have a file of TUM documents as TUM did not send them these documents to inform them on anything. When asked what challenges limit TUM from promoting teachers welfare, teacher respondents had this to say:

The other challenge is that we have an information gap where we do not know the clear objectives of TUM. Like what actually is TUM supposed to do. Therefore, in that case we are just being kept in the dark. The other point is when they want to do whatever they want to do they need to go on the air to communicate to teachers. They may communicate on the internet, TV... because teachers need such updates in order to be aware of what is going on in TUM (School E3 personal interview, 11 May, 2022).

Document review also showed that TUM's strategic plan 2014-2016 had also identified a problem of poor communication within the union. This made the Union to come up with some objectives that would counter this problem of communication. One of the objectives was to communicate to TUM members on issues concerning the union through press conferences. This was to be achieved by conducting three press conferences per year to interact with teachers and getting immediate feedback from them like on government policies. The other objective was to communicate on

issues concerning the union through media and this would be achieved by producing a newsletter and sending a copy to each school. Despite these good communication plans, teachers indicated that they did not experience any improvement in TUM's communication. They felt that they were always kept in the dark on what TUM was doing. This shows that the objective of improving communication stated in the strategic plan 2014-2016 had not been achieved so far.

It was also revealed that the issue of producing a newsletter for the consumption of teachers was not new as previously it was being produced by TUM and it was an efficient way of showing accountability of TUM as it communicated to teachers frequently on how the union was being run. However, this newsletter was stopped without explanation to teachers. One of the teachers shared with the interviewer that

in the past TUM could display information, they were releasing a newsletter known as *Nantchengwa*. It was being released every six months and it was containing all the information on what TUM is doing, their plans and people would just access *Nantchengwa* that was free and was being given to each school to check activities of TUM for transparency (School A4, personal interview, 4 April, 2022).

These newsletters were helpful in communicating with teachers but they had stopped sometime back. This created mistrust between the members and TUM officials. It was evident from the responses of teachers that they wanted to be treated like professionals, and that needed to start with a strong sense of communication between TUM officials and the teachers. Members need to feel that their opinion matters and they can be trusted as professionals to have a say in the

union's decision-making based on shared values and outcomes. This is only possible where information flows between the leadership and members of the union. A study by Nchimbi (2018) reported that unions did not share information with their members, as such; members were ignorant of what was going on in their union. Bakokor and Antwi (2020) point out that communication is key to ensuring optimum employee-performance. Communication ensures that union members are not only informed of the activities and decisions of the Union, but they are involved in them and help the Union in working towards the attainment of its goals.

#### ***4.4.2 TUM's Non-Involvement of Teachers in Decision Making***

The other factor that was identified from interviews with respondents as limiting the effective contribution of TUM towards improving the welfare of teachers was TUM's lack of involvement of teachers in decision-making. This factor has also been pointed out in discussing other factors earlier in the study.

##### ***4.4.2.1 Involuntary Membership***

Every union has a constitution that guides its operations. Likewise, TUM had a well-documented constitution that guided it. The constitution of TUM part II section 7 dictated that every teacher registered as such in the register of teachers of Malawi shall be eligible for admission to the Union as a full member upon completion of the membership and registration form (TUM constitution, p. 3). Despite this being the case, the study revealed that the teachers' experiences and views painted the Union in a different light. From the study, many respondents revealed that they were asked neither if they wanted to join TUM nor were they given membership application forms to fill. They were made to join the Union involuntarily. When asked to mention the

reason why they joined TUM as a union, respondents cited that they did not have reasons for such as they did not join the Union willingly. Many respondents stated that upon being employed, they just discovered on their payroll that they were being deducted a subscription fee to TUM, which implied that they were members of TUM. A teacher respondent expressed it this way:

I do not know when I joined TUM, I think it was automatic when I got employed. This is what I know. I started working in 2009 and soon after, TUM started deducting membership fee from my payslip. That is when I knew I have joined TUM (School C1, personal interview, 4 May, 2022).

With the scenario in which members felt they did not join the Union out of their own volition, they were unlikely to feel a sense of identification with the organisation. They were also unlikely to feel that the Union represented their interests as was expressed by some participants that TUM represented teachers, but it did not represent the views of teachers. Such sentiments indicated that the Union had imposed itself on teachers since they did not make a choice to join it or make voluntary application for their membership. TUM's non-involvement of teachers then, was right from the onset when enlisting them for membership. Members ought to voluntarily join a union with the conviction that it stands to further their interests, that is the basis of solidarity that sustains a union (Bourdieu, 1984). In addition, the manner in which teachers became members of TUM did not provide an opportunity in which they could be made aware of the Union's role, goals and objectives. The majority of members were therefore unlikely to be knowledgeable about their Union. In their study on trade unions in Malawi, Kalusopa et al., (2012), noted a marked gap in knowledge of union issues between union leaders and the members.

When a TUM official was asked during one of the interviews about how teachers became members of TUM, he confirmed that membership was by virtue of one being a teacher:

[...]in TUM, registration of membership is automatic provided you are on payroll as a teacher, you are a member of TUM. So it's up to teachers to choose to contribute but not participate. (Official 3 personal interview, 9 May, 2022).

The idea of automatic membership did not seem to agree with what was in TUM's constitution, which required one to fill out membership application forms to become a member of TUM. During the study, teacher respondents however, felt that they needed to have a say regarding their joining of TUM. One of the respondents observed:

The major problem is that there is no any contractual agreement between teachers and TUM body. Because if we had a contract agreement they would have laid down the points, guiding the agreement that is there... it is like we are just members by default. (School B1 personal interview, 29 April, 2022).

Three response by the teacher respondent in the above interview also suggested that the nature of relationship between TUM and its members was not clearly defined in terms of the obligations of the Union to its members and vice versa. In other words, a contractual agreement would have afforded members a chance to make their decision on whether they became members or not based on whether they deemed



the terms serving their interest. Bourdieu's Social Capital Theory points out that the profits, which accrue from a group, are the basis of membership to the group (Bourdieu, 1986).

The study thus revealed that teachers needed to get involved in decisions that were important to their career. They felt that TUM needed to be seeking their consent to join the union. The fact that TUM sometimes involuntarily gave membership to teachers without them signing the registration form was frustrating to teachers. A study by Bakokor & Antwi (2020) on the effects of trade union activities on employee performance discovered that employees were not happy with automatic membership to a union, preferring instead optional membership. Their Similarly, Mafisa's (2017) study on the Tanzania Teachers Union pointed out the need for voluntary membership in order to foster teachers' positive attitude to the Union. Thus, forcing members to join a union fosters negative attitudes towards the union.

#### *4.4.2.2 Lack of Grassroots Visits*

The other problem, which was identified as limiting TUM's effective contribution towards teachers' welfare, was the lack of visits to the grassroots. During the study teachers complained of lack of involvement in TUM's decisions by lack of visits to schools to interact with them on issues affecting teachers. This made teachers lose interest and hope in TUM. When asked what they thought TUM needed to do to ensure that the issues of teachers' welfare were taken into consideration, teacher interviewees had this to say:

The best way is for TUM to engage the teachers who are the members... so in that way TUM can solicit views. Those views could be a true reflection of what teachers want unlike just

talking of things that are not even assisting teachers. (School A2, personal interview, 4 April, 2022).

The above interview response indicated that teachers felt their needs would be better identified by TUM through consultation with them than through TUM's own unilateral decisions. In a situation where teachers felt TUM's decisions and activities did not represent their needs, dissatisfaction with the Union and lack of a sense of ownership were likely to result. In another interview at School A3, a teacher respondent still echoed the view that there was no involvement of teachers at grassroots level:

Actually on the part of TUM, it is just a proposal that for TUM to run better, it must restructure its board. Actually, it should start by involving the teachers from the grassroots. Involving them when it comes to decision making. Those committees and representatives should start right away from the grassroots level (School A3, personal interview, 4 April, 2022).

The outcry was again expressed at School B4, an indication that there was high consensus among teachers that TUM did not have grassroots consultation to inform whatever it was doing in representing teachers. The respondent at School B4 intimated:

As much as TUM knows that teachers are suffering, but those problems should not come from them as leaders but they should come from actual teachers who are experiencing the challenges so that in that way TUM can perform better (school B4, personal interview, 29 April, 2022).

The respondents in this case felt that TUM was not interacting with teachers to hear their views and concerns to inform its plans and what actions it could take. This therefore meant that TUM and its members were not on the same page in terms of what were issues of concern to teachers and the ways of addressing them. Bourdieu's Social Capital Theory explains that the reproduction of social capital presupposes an unceasing effort of sociability, a continuous series of exchanges in which recognition is endlessly affirmed and reaffirmed (Bourdieu, 1984). Constant interaction between the teacher members at the grassroots with the union leaders would lead to a more meaningful and impactful union able to the lives of teachers and their everyday challenges. The collective bargaining power of the union therefore rests on the extent to which members feel it represents their needs as that affects their solidarity.

Although teachers complained of TUM's lack of grassroots involvement, TUM officials who were interviewed blamed it on teachers themselves. They claimed that teachers did not show up for Union meetings once such meetings were called. One TUM official indicated:

Another challenge is for example you organise an event or a function to meet teachers at 3 or 2 PM you find that teachers would tell you yes we will be there when you go there you will only see few people there turn up (official 2, personal interview, 16 May, 2022).

The important question however, is why there was such apathy from meetings by teachers. The reason has been already alluded to, that teachers were less likely to commit themselves to the Union when they felt that it did not represent their interest

and when membership was involuntary. People are also bound to be active in their membership of an organisation when they see tangible benefits from their membership. Teachers' disinterest in the Union could be attributed to the fact that they did not see its benefits. As earlier pointed out in the study, apart from fighting for salaries members felt that most of their needs were not being met by the Union. The Union for instance, did not run any programmes or provided services that were crucial for motivating teachers.

TUM officials also blamed teachers for non-attendance at the meetings the Union called because the teachers always wanted financial incentive to attend meetings:

...teachers always want something in their pocket if they are to attend a meeting. If there is nothing it means they will always say negative things. Teachers contribute K500 per month, so if they see leaders organising meetings they always mock us and say we have eaten a lot of their money and then we are conducting a meeting without giving them anything, hence they don't attend the meetings at all (official 2 personal interview, 16 May, 2022).

On the same, indeed one of the teacher respondent echoed this thought that

we contribute K500 every month to TUM and this money only benefits the leaders of TUM. They don't give us allowances to attend their meeting while the representative receives the allowance (School D4 personal interview, 16 May, 2022).

The behaviour reported by Official 2 in the interview above, is not unique to teachers, but other public servants in Malawi. Organisations and other development partners

have bemoaned what has been termed the “allowance culture” in which public servants have tended to demand allowances for their attendance at meetings or workshops. Low salaries have been cited as the reason for this culture among public servants. Also as pointed out earlier, teachers do not have extra allowances to supplement their salary, as would be the case with other public service professions, therefore it is not surprising that they saw TUM meetings as a chance of getting some form of an allowance. The sentiments expressed in the interview also demonstrated that there was lack of trust between teachers and the Union in terms of finances. Teachers felt that money from the membership fees they were being deducted was benefiting the leadership at their expense. The point raises an important issue of accountability and transparency, which was pointed out in interviews and is discussed later in the study.

Teachers’ lack of interest in meetings that TUM officials pointed out, also calls for the Union to do some serious reflection and find ways of addressing the challenge. Without grassroots meetings, the intercourse between the leadership and members is impossible, yet those intercourses are the very basis of any union’s existence and sustenance. They are also the platform for consultation. A number of studies on unions indicated that unions lacked contact with the grassroots through meetings (Habeenzu, 2012; Kalusopa et. al., 2012; Kankuta et al., 2020). Bourdie (1984) emphasised that meetings are important in any organisation for people to be able to listen to each other’s views for the object of its improvement.

#### ***4.4.3. Lack of Transparency and Accountability***

The other point that emerged from the study regarding teachers’ perceptions about the factors that limited the effective contribution of TUM towards improving the

welfare of teachers was that member teachers felt that TUM lacked transparency and accountability in its activities.

Teacher respondents mentioned that TUM was not transparent and accountable to its members. This was evident by the Union's inability to account for the funds it deducted teachers as membership fees through financial reports. One of the teacher respondents remarked regarding accountability of membership fees:

With TUM we are not satisfied with the way they are not open with the money they deduct. When we seek them out for help in our poor conditions they are not available to help us yet they deduct money from our salaries every month in the name of membership contribution fee to TUM. To make it worse, they don't even release an account on how the money has been used. This is our contribution. We have the right to know where and how our money has been used (school A4, personal interview, 4 April, 2022).

When asked how they ensure transparency in TUM official2 responded that

Yah transparency is there but sometimes the secretariat cannot be open to all teachers lets say for example we use to have meetings in Lilongwe. So whenever we are called, we are told about the stand of our count. If things are going well we are told to say now we are at this stage or we are experiencing these challenges then we pass the information to our fellow teachers but when we try to pass the information to other teachers, and then you find that only few teachers are present. So its only these teachers who are present who will try to

appreciate the financial stand of where we are and those teachers who are not present at that meeting will always say bad about TUM.

While some documents were found in the school offices, so far the researcher found none on financial records.

TUM had an obligation to inform its members about how much it raised in membership deductions and how it spent them since it was their money. The Union executive was entrusted to manage the finances raised from members on their behalf on the basis that it was for the promotion of their welfare and would be accountable to them. In its failure to be accountable to the membership, TUM breached the trust members had given it and failed to realise that it existed because of them. Further demonstrating that accountability was an issue of great concern to members, the *Weekend Nation* newspaper dated 17/10/2020 carried a report on how some concerned teachers in the country accused TUM of deducting money from teachers who were not its members. In their letter to TUM, the teachers wanted the Union to stop deducting money from teachers who were non-members and publish names of all members of TUM for the sake of transparency and accountability (Meki, 2020).

The Union did not respond or address this issue as expected by the members such that *Nyasa Times* dated 29 January 2021 reported that teachers had threatened to withdraw from TUM membership over accountability concerns. According to the newspaper report, teachers had written a follow-up letter demanding TUM to be accountable and produce a financial report on the management of the membership fees that it deducted from teachers' salaries. The teachers were also demanding to

know from the Union how the government had responded on the issue of Covid-19 risk allowances; on promotion of long- serving teachers and self-upgraded teachers; and an explanation on the criteria TUM uses for one to become a member of the union; as most teachers claimed that they had never filled any membership form. Teachers had to demand for such information because, according to them, TUM did not openly communicate to teachers such matters.

These findings agree with the study conducted by Rhadhi (2021), who observed that lack of transparency was one of the main issues that hindered trade unions from being effective in delivering their services to their members. In some instances, as reported by Habeezu (2016), lack of accountability and transparency was one of the reasons leading to the formation of splinter unions.

#### ***4.4.4 Secondary School Teachers Feel Side-Lined***

Many secondary school teacher respondents indicated that they felt left out in TUM's activities. They felt that TUM was more active when it came to issues to do with primary school teachers. As such, secondary school teachers felt that maybe TUM was not for them. When asked what challenges they faced in accessing services from TUM, participants cited that being at secondary school was a bit challenging because they were not much included in the activities of TUM.

It's like TUM does not recognise much secondary school teachers so even if they have problems sometimes it's difficult for TUM to help these teachers maybe it's because the administration positions are being held by primary school teachers that's why (school A1, personal interview, 4 April, 2022).



Secondary school teachers felt that TUM's leadership hierarchy was dominated by primary school teachers hence TUM was more responsive to issues concerning the latter. Secondary school teacher respondents felt that the process that was followed in choosing TUM leaders put secondary school teachers at a disadvantage. They explained that each school is asked to send a certain number of representatives to vote for TUM representatives. Considering that, there are more primary schools than secondary schools, more members at primary school voted than at secondary school resulting in the Union's leadership positions being predominantly held by primary school teachers. These teachers' sentiments agree with the social capital theory which states that in a union, the members of the group must regulate the conditions of access to the right to declare oneself a member of the group and, above all, to set oneself up as a representative (Bourdieu, 1983). This is important, as members would have a say about who they want to represent them.

To further demonstrate that secondary school teachers felt side-lined by TUM another interviewee had this to say:

In secondary schools (laughs) (pause), in general TUM is taken as an organisation for primary school teachers because most of the problems that are taking place or are there at secondary schools are not being handled seriously by TUM. I remember that was 2020 when salaries were delayed. TUM had to mobilise teachers to start a stay away. It happened that all primary school teachers were paid and secondary schools were not but TUM called off the stay away simply because the primary school teachers have been paid. That is the sign that they don't take problems of secondary school teachers

seriously (school A4, personal interview, 4 April, 2022).

The sentiments in the above interview show that some secondary school teachers felt that their welfare was not the concern of TUM. These findings are in collaboration with Habeenzu (2016) on factors influencing the formation of splinter unions. Habeenzu found out that the formation of SESTUZ in Zambia was in reaction to what secondary schools perceived as poor representation of the secondary school sector by their only teacher union ZNUT at that time. TUM effort's in dealing with issues concerning teachers needed to incorporate all the members of the union without giving an image of favouritism to the members. The network of relationships is the product of investment strategies, individual or collective, consciously or unconsciously aimed at establishing or reproducing social relationships that are directly usable in the short or long term (Bourdieu, 1982). This means that if some members are consciously or unconsciously sidelined by the union in the way it deals with the problems encountered by such members, these members may lose trust in the union and thereby develop a negative attitude towards the union. This is further advocated by the social capital theory that central to building social capital is trust and trust is built up through continued interaction across networks and relationships.

#### ***4.4.5 Political Interference in TUM***

The other factor that participants cited as limiting the effectiveness of TUM in promoting teachers welfare was the interference of politics in the decisions of TUM. Some respondents claimed that TUM administrators engaged themselves in political matters and this affected their effectiveness in conducting their responsibilities:

TUM should at all cost desist from political interferences. It should try to be independent and leaders should exercise

integrity. If the trend of letting their political affiliation influence their decisions that affect the masses there is nothing that TUM will achieve (School D4, personal interview, 9 May, 2022).

Teachers also felt that politics was at play when TUM failed to stick by its decision when a decision to resort to industrial action like withdrawing labour had been agreed. They explained that TUM would later cancel the strike communicating that the government was addressing the issues yet the issues remained unaddressed. This made teachers suspect that politics had played a role in influencing the decisions of TUM leaders and affected the way TUM served its purpose to teachers. Shivji (2009) suggested that sometimes trade unions are there not for securing the benefits of their members, but to be a state organ to support political influence. However, for a union to be effective, it must be free from any kind of interference from external forces. When external forces interfere with the decisions of a union, the union gets affected in its discharge of its duties to its members. A union is supposed to focus on the interest of its members to build a positive perception in its members.

The participants further indicated that mostly the government did not react to TUM's demands to increase teachers' salaries or other economic demands teachers proposed. One respondent noted for instance that when "TUM organised a strike demanding Covid-19 allowances for teachers, the strike was later called without the government honouring the demands of TUM. One respondent commented:

You see, the government and politics also determine how effective a union can run. If the people in power do not want to improve the welfare of teachers TUM cannot succeed. ...hence nothing fruitful can come out of the strikes (School D3,

personal interview, 9 May, 2022).

The success of unions as the above sentiments suggest, depends to some extent, on the cooperation of the government. For instance, Kalusopa et al. (2012) observed that in Malawi sometimes the central government did not comply with some agreements reached during negotiations with the unions. Such government non-compliance rendered unions like TUM ineffective and that greatly affected the attitude of members towards the Union.

#### **4.5 Chapter summary**

The focus of chapter four was to present the data that was gathered through in-depth interviews and document analysis. Through the collected information, it has been noted that many members of TUM are unaware of the duties obligations and responsibilities of TUM except that of bargaining for salary increment. It has also been noted that TUM has been effective in performing some of its duties to bargain for the benefits of teachers which has necessitated a positive perception on the members. Nevertheless, there is a problem in areas of communication and keeping the members up to date on what is really going on within the union. This has been a major concern for members who think that they are being marginalized by the union executive and many think that executive do pursue their own interest at the expense of its members. This has in fact made them reluctant to show interest to union activities.

# CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 5.1 Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore teachers' perceptions on the undertakings of the Teachers' Union of Malawi (TUM) in promoting teachers' welfare in the Northern Education Division of Malawi. The study was guided by Bourdieu's Social Capital Theory. It employed a qualitative approach and involved 23 respondents, which consisted of Teachers Union of Malawi administrators and teachers who are members of TUM in public secondary schools. The data was collected through interviews and document review directed by three major objectives namely: to determine teachers' perceptions on the roles of Teachers' Union of Malawi; to understand the perceptions of teachers on Teachers Union of Malawi's ability to safeguard teachers welfare in public secondary schools in Malawi; and to examine the factors that limit TUM from promoting the welfare of teachers.

## 5.2 Summary of the Findings

The findings of this study were summarized according to the specific objectives. The first specific objective was to determine the role of TUM in education. The study revealed that some teachers were not aware of the roles of TUM except the one of bargaining for salaries. The teachers were also unaware of the goals and objectives of TUM. The findings also revealed that the majority of the respondents perceived TUM to be performing the traditional roles that was mostly bargaining for better remuneration. The other roles that enable teachers to have some benefits that would

improve their welfare were minimal or non-existent.

The second objective of the study was to understand the perceptions of teachers on Teachers Union of Malawi's ability to safeguard teachers' welfare in public secondary schools in Malawi. The findings showed that the majority of the respondents were not satisfied with the effectiveness of TUM in safeguarding its members' welfare. The teachers were of the view that their economic, social, and environmental welfare was not favourable. The teachers blamed the Union for not utilising its bargaining power to improve the welfare of teachers. The teachers were of the view that the Union needed to have motivational programmes for teachers and take a role in making sure that schools had teaching and learning resources to improve their working environment. The teachers were also of the view that TUM was not playing any role to improve their social welfare such as making sure that they had decent housing, medical insurance, and bereavement assistance.

Furthermore, the third research objective was to explore the factors that limited TUM in improving teachers' welfare. Teachers cited challenges such as communication gap between teachers and the Union, inaccessible Union representatives, and non-involvement of teachers in the activities and decisions of TUM. Teachers were of the view that in order for the Union to be effective in the improvement of teachers' welfare, it needed to involve teachers from the grassroots level in its activities. Teachers also felt that a good channel of communication within the Union was crucial in improving the welfare of teachers. Furthermore, the teachers were of the view that TUM needed to be conducting meetings with members to effectively understand and address their needs. The other factor that was discovered to limit the effectiveness of TUM was political interference in TUM's affairs. Respondents

suggested that TUM leaders needed to be of high integrity to reduce political interference in TUM affairs.

### **5.3 Conclusions**

This section presents conclusions of the study based on the research objectives which were: to determine teachers' perceptions on the roles of Teachers' Union of Malawi; to understand the perceptions of teachers on Teachers Union of Malawi's ability to safeguard teachers welfare in public secondary schools in Malawi; and to examine the perceptions of teachers on the factors that limit TUM from promoting the welfare of teachers.

From the first objective, for teachers to have a good perception of their union they need to be inducted on the objectives of the Union. TUM needs to create awareness programmes so that its members are made aware of duties, responsibilities, functions/operations, and obligations of the Union. Teachers must also be involved in the planning of the future goals of the Union. In this way, every member of the union would be aware of the goals of their union and get involved in its activities as much as possible to ensure its effectiveness. Furthermore, the roles of TUM should not only focus on issues of salary increment. The Union should invest effort in other welfare areas as well if the overall welfare of its teachers is to improve.

From the second objective, TUM has recorded some commendable achievements in the area of economic welfare in terms of lobbying for salary adjustments. TUM has, therefore, had a positive influence in this area of teacher welfare. However, it seems to be the opinion of many informants that the teachers' association has restricted its role to negotiating higher salaries for teachers while many equally important issues

of teacher welfare need addressing. TUM has therefore not been effective in promoting other aspects of teacher welfare such as lobbying for improvement of the teaching and learning environment, teachers' housing, and running motivational programmes. The union has not been active in the provision of both social and environmental wellbeing of teachers as well as negotiating for better conditions of service for its members, which has affected the welfare of teachers. To have a significant impact on teachers, TUM needs to show tangible evidence of competence in holistic improvement of teacher welfare. The Union's failure to holistically address teachers' welfare resulted in their dissatisfaction with TUM in such areas.

The third objective explored the factors that limit TUM from promoting the welfare of secondary school teachers. The study determined that the communication gap that exists between the Union administrators and its members is a huge challenge that limits the Union in its service provision to members. In addition, the non-involvement of teacher members in the Union's decisions is another challenge. The study also noted that the attitude of some members of TUM in not showing ownership of the union by not getting involved in its activities has led to a challenge in the thorough running of the union. While the union may be trying to get teachers involved in its activities, some teachers are shunning away such meetings making a gap in communication among the important stakeholders of the union. TUM should therefore pull in effort to find out why members are having such an attitude towards their meetings and address such issues promptly to ensure that the solidarity that holds a union together is strengthened. Thus, members of the union should take great participation in the unions' matters to ensure improved services of the union.

Furthermore, all members of the union should be treated equally and be given a



listening ear by the union administrators so that they can have nothing to blame the union for. As it is, many secondary school respondents expressed dissatisfaction with TUM on the issue of representation as they felt side lined by TUM. A case in point is the formation of the splinter-union SESTU by secondary school teachers who felt that TUM sidelined them and served more the interests of primary school teachers. If TUM is to be effective and have the trust of all its members, it must maintain close intercourse with and among members and represent the interests of all its constituent members. By doing this, members will be satisfied to some extent with the union's services and it is possible the tainted image of the union on the issue of its relation to its members would be repaired among the members to enable them have a positive attitude towards their union.

The study further revealed a lack of accountability and transparency in the operations of the Union. Representatives. This has led to a negative perception among the membership who feel that TUM is not honest in its handling of finances. Members were especially concerned with the Union's management of membership fees. Financial accountability is key to maintaining credibility and trust to the membership.

Overall, teachers have a good perception of TUM in its ability to handle some of their welfare needs like salary increments, promotions, leave grants, and legal representation. On the other hand, teachers want TUM to do more in lobbying for their improved social welfare. In addition, the issue of communication has been a major concern for members who think that they are being marginalized by the union administrators and many think that the administrators do pursue their own interest at the expense of its members. This has in fact made them reluctant to show interest to union activities. They did not feel their membership to the Union beneficial in a

significant way. Thus, the value of solidarity that traditionally acts as a unifying force is weak in TUM.

## 5.4 Recommendations

The study put forward the following suggestions/recommendations:

- I. TUM should provide regular trainings and awareness among its members. This will create a deeper understanding of their roles and responsibilities in representing their needs and concerns to the respective bodies. Also, through trainings TUM members will be capable of understanding the primary objectives of their trade union and how represented they are henceforth it will enable them to provide as much cooperation as they can to make the union powerful in meeting the needs of the teachers. The training will be able to shape the members new way of thinking and making decisions towards their trade union. These trainings will also promote unity and a sense of belonging to the members of the union. They will also provide awareness on the manner of how contributions are used henceforth, promoting transparency.
- II. The Teachers Union of Malawi should expand its focus on traditional roles that centre much on negotiation of salaries to include the establishment of sustainable schemes that have significant impacts on the side of members. In this regard, it is recommended that TUM should seek expertise on how they can establish financial services that would economically cushion teachers. These financial services should be able to provide loans to teachers. This will make teachers see the impact of TUM on their welfare.
- III. TUM should intensify efforts in ensuring teachers are promoted to another grade when due. The Union should therefore step up efforts in its dialogue

with government. Prompt promotion will promote better welfare for teachers.

- IV. TUM should improve communication and contact with members by establishing physical offices, holding regular meetings with the grassroots and using appropriate media to keep members informed of its activities. In this way, the Union will ensure that there is always an organic link between its leadership and members at the grassroots level.
- V. TUM should provide a platform for members' participation in its activities and decision-making through regular consultation with members and maintaining effective communication.
- VI. TUM should improve accountability and transparency mechanisms by among others providing regular financial and activity reports.

## **5.5. Suggested Areas for Further Research**

While this study focused on the perceptions of teachers on TUM's ability to promote teachers welfare, another study could assess the institutional capacity of TUM in working on teachers' welfare. The rationale being that TUM's ability to fulfil its mandate to teachers depends on its institutional capacity.

The current study limited itself to the Northern Education Division. The study could be replicated in other education divisions in the country to gain a national picture of how teachers view TUM.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1: Interview guide for teachers

- 1) How many years have you been a member of TUM?
- 2) Why did you join TUM?
- 3) What do you think are the roles of TUM in education?
- 4) How does TUM champion for proper access to financial services by teachers in their societies?
- 5) How do TUM activities in SACCO champion for better loans for member teachers?
- 6) Do TUM activities succeed in ensuring financial assistance like salary advances? How?
- 7) Do you have access to a medical scheme?
- 8) How does TUM effectively ensure individual members access to medical schemes when faced with sicknesses?
- 9) What is the role of TUM in disbursement of death gratuity during member teacher demise?
- 10) What role does TUM play to enable teachers' access to sufficient education loans upon request?
- 11) What role does TUM play in enabling member teachers to access legal representation when need arise?
- 12) How does TUM advocate for better salaries for teacher?
- 13) What role does TUM play in championing for promotion of teachers?
- 14) What role does TUM play to facilitate for the availability of funds for teaching and learning resources?

15)What do you think are the factors that limit TUM in improving the welfare of teachers?

16)What do you think TUM leaders should do to improve the welfare of teachers?

17)Do you have any other comments to make about TUM and teachers' welfare in public secondary schools in your district?

Thank you very much for providing very important information that will assist in carrying out this study. If there will be need to contact you again I will not hastate. Let me assure you once again the information provided is purely for academic purpose only. Thank you very much.



## Appendix 2. Interview guide for TUM executives

The interviews completed with the Teachers Union of Malawi Executives will be semi-structured and responsive to the information being given by the participants. The following are interview protocols that will be used during the interviews. Additional questions may arise during the interview process.

1. I would like to know more about the role of the TUM executives. Please complete this sentence with as many descriptors as you see fit: The role of local teacher union leader involves?
2. Tell me about how the teacher union representative position arose for you
3. What is the role of TUM in enhancing the welfare of teachers?
4. Outline the structure of TUM and explain its corporate role.
5. What does TUM do to ensure that it meets the needs of its members?
6. What challenges do TUM executive face to discharge their duty to enhance teacher welfare?

### Appendix 3. Document Analysis Guide

Document	Component	comment
Formal memos	The memos communicating the initiatives of TUM in ensuring welfare of teachers	
Newspaper	How TUM communicate to teachers	
TUM strategic plan	Issues planned to ensure welfare of teachers  Cross check if the plans have been implemented	
TUM constitution	Objectives of TUM  Implementation of the objectives	
Formal letters	Communication to members or the employer on issues of Welfare	

## Appendix 4 Consent form



Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC)

### Informed Consent Form for Research in Educational leadership and management

#### Introduction

I am **Colleta Kampingo Sibande** from Mzuzu University. I am doing research on the perceptions of teachers on Teachers Union of Malawi (TUM) undertakings in promoting the welfare and professional development of secondary school teachers. This consent form may contain words that you do not understand. Please ask me to stop as we go through the information and I will take time to explain. If you have questions later, you can ask them of me.

#### Purpose of the research

This research aims to explore the perceptions of teacher members on Teachers Union of Malawi practices in enhancing the welfare of secondary school teachers.

#### Type of Research Intervention

This research will involve your participation in a group discussion and/ individual interview.

#### Participant Selection

You are being invited to take part in this research because you are a secondary school teacher

member of TUM.

### **Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to participate or not. If you choose not to participate nothing will change. You may skip any question and move on to the next question.

### **Duration**

The research takes place for a period of 1 year.

### **Risks**

You do not have to answer any question or take part in the discussion/interview/ if you feel the question(s) are too personal or if talking about them makes you uncomfortable.

### **Reimbursements**

You will not be provided any incentive to take part in the research.

### **Sharing the Results**

The knowledge that we get from this research will be shared with you and your community before it is made widely available to the public. Following, we will publish the results so other interested people may learn from the research.

### **Who to Contact**

If you have any questions, you can ask them now or later. If you wish to ask questions later, you may contact: Miss Colleta Kampingo Sibande, 0882457790.

This proposal has been reviewed and approved by Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee

(MZUNIREC) which is a committee whose task is to make sure that research participants are protected from harm. If you wish to find out more about the Committee, contact Mr. Gift Mbwele, Mzuzu University Research Ethics (MZUNIREC) Administrator, Mzuzu University, P/Bag 201, Luwingu, Mzuzu 2, Phone: 0999404008/0888641486

Do you have any questions?

## Part II: Certificate of Consent

*I have been invited to participate in research about perceptions of teachers on Teachers Union of Malawi (TUM) undertakings in promoting the welfare and professional development of secondary school teachers.*

**I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I have been asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study**

Print Name of Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Day/month/year

*If illiterate <sup>1</sup>*

**I have witnessed the accurate reading of the consent form to the potential participant, and the individual has had the opportunity to ask questions. I confirm that the individual has given consent freely.**

---

<sup>1</sup> A literate witness must sign (if possible, this person should be selected by the participant and should have no connection to the research team). Participants who are illiterate should include their thumb print as well.

Print name of witness\_\_\_\_\_

Thumb print of participant

Signature of witness \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Day/month/year

Statement by the researcher/person taking consent

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant, and to the best of my ability made sure that the participant understands the research project. I confirm the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

Signature of Researcher /person taking the consent\_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Day/month/year



# MZUZU UNIVERSITY

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29<sup>th</sup> March 2022

## TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

### **LETTER OF INTRODUCTION: Ms COLLETA SIBANDE**

Ms Colleta Sibande is a registered Master of Education (Leadership and Management) Program student at Mzuzu University. She has been cleared by the Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC) to collect data for the research study she is conducting as a requirement for the program.

Kindly assist her accordingly.

Yours faithfully,

**Dr Margaret M. Mdolo**  
**Program Coordinator**



# MZUZU UNIVERSITY

DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH

Mzuzu University  
Private Bag 201  
Luwinga  
Mzuzu 2  
MALAWI  
TEL: 01 320 722  
FAX: 01 320 648

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## MZUZU UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (MZUNIREC)

Ref No: MZUNIREC/DOR/22/27

28/03/22

Colleta Sibande,  
Mzuzu University,  
P/Bag 201,  
Mzuzu.

Email:

[colletasibande@gmail.com](mailto:colletasibande@gmail.com)

Dear Colleta Sibande,

**RESEARCH ETHICS AND REGULATORY APPROVAL AND PERMIT FOR PROTOCOL REF NO: MZUNIREC/DOR/22/27: ASSESSING THE PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS ON TEACHERS UNION OF MALAWI (TUM) UNDERTAKINGS IN PROMOTING THE WELFARE AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS.**

Having satisfied all the relevant ethical and regulatory requirements, I am pleased to inform you that the above referred research protocol has officially been approved. You are now permitted to proceed with its implementation. Should there be any amendments to the approved protocol in the course of implementing it, you shall be required to seek approval of such amendments before implementation of the same.

This approval is valid for one year from the date of issuance of this approval. If the study goes beyond one year, an annual approval for continuation shall be required to be sought from the Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC) in a format that is available at the Secretariat. Once the study is finalised, you are required to furnish the Committee with a final report of the study. The Committee reserves the right to carry out compliance inspection of this approved protocol at any time as may be deemed by it. As such, you are expected to properly

**Committee Address:**

**Secretariat, Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee, P/Bag 201, Luwinga, Mzuzu 2; E-mail address: [mzunirec@mzuni.ac.mw](mailto:mzunirec@mzuni.ac.mw)**



maintain all study documents including consent forms.

Wishing you a successful implementation of your study.

Yours Sincerely,



**Gift Mbwele**

**MZUZU UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATOR**

**For: CHAIRMAN OF MZUNIREC**

**Committee Address:**

***Secretariat, Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee, P/Bag 201, Luwinga, Mzuzu 2; E-mail address: [mzunirec@mzuni.ac.mw](mailto:mzunirec@mzuni.ac.mw)***